

THE POLITICS OF A U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE
TRAINING PROGRAM IN PANAMA

by

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B. A., Kansas State University, 1964

A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

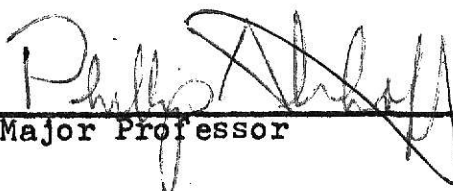
MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Political Science

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1973

Approved by:


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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Security Assistance Program

The present U. S. security assistance program is an integral part of U. S. foreign policy. As President Richard Nixon has noted:

"Security assistance is a cornerstone of our foreign policy and of Free World security, as it has been ever since the early days of the Second World War. Our programs have adapted to changing circumstances, but our purpose has remained steadfast--to assist those willing to work for peace and progress...the purpose of U. S. security assistance, therefore, is to ease and to speed the transition to greater self-reliance."¹

The various military assistance programs of this security assistance effort are approved by the State Department and are implemented by the Defense Department. Both of these offices coordinate closely with each other in order that these programs can serve as an effective arm of U. S. foreign policy.² At the highest departmental level, this coordination is presently effected between the Under Secretary of State for Coordinating Security Assistance Programs and the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Security Assistance.

Currently, there are three major categories which comprise the security assistance program: grant military assistance, foreign military sales credits, and security supporting assistance, the latter being intended for Southeast Asian countries. Since this study is primarily concerned with the

grant assistance category as applied to Latin America, specifically Panama, this category of assistance and this region of the world will receive obvious emphasis. As one of the three categories of security assistance, U.S. grant military assistance which consists of materiel and training is provided to friendly and allied nations.³ The nonreimbursable funds for this assistance come right out of the U.S. taxpayers' pockets. As far as these total costs are concerned, during fiscal years 1950-1972, grant military assistance expenditures to Latin America cost the U.S. taxpayers approximately \$805 million spent in 21 different Latin American countries.⁴

Military training programs which comprise one of the two components of grant military assistance account for 54 per cent (\$10.9 million) of the \$20.3 million allocated for the U.S. grant assistance funds to Latin America during fiscal year 1973.⁵ Grant materiel assistance, the other component of grant military assistance, accounts for the remainder of these funds. In recent years, dollars for the grant materiel programs have been reduced substantially due to present executive emphasis on the foreign military sales program. As a consequence, military training assistance now receives a higher percentage of the grant military assistance funds than it did in previous years. Normally, these training assistance programs for Latin American military personnel are conducted in three basic ways: training the students in U.S. military schools in the Panama Canal Zone; instructing and/or orienting them at military installations in

the United States; and rendering training assistance via U.S. mobile training teams in the Latin American countries upon request by them for a specific training project.

The Value of U.S. Military Assistance Training Programs

The long-term value which can be gained from these military training programs in Latin America has been underscored frequently by key, high-ranking U.S. political and military leaders. Their comments indicate that these programs can make a positive contribution to the improvement of U.S.-Latin American relations. The viewpoint of General George Mather, a former Commander in Chief of U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) in the Canal Zone emphasized this aspect: "[These programs]...have traditionally been a cordial working relationship between [U.S.] military representatives in-country and this influential position of Latin American society [the Latin American military]." ⁶ Another supporter of training assistance is Lieutenant General George Seignious, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Security Assistance, who points out that it is essential to have rapport with the Latin American nations because this can contribute to hemispheric security. In turn, training programs can be an effective means of maintaining these friendly relations in order to promote "...a sound investment against Communist threats to infiltrate the Western Hemisphere." ⁷

Governor Nelson Rockefeller recognized the importance of these programs subsequent to his trip to Latin America in 1969. He felt that it was necessary that these programs "...which

bring military and police personnel from the other hemisphere nations to the U.S. and to other training centers in Panama be continued and strengthened."⁸ General Andrew Goodpaster, presently the Commander in Chief of the U.S. European Command, has perhaps most succinctly expressed the various values that can be gained from military training programs. He noted that "...the most enduring value of military assistance is achieved through the training of allied personnel in the U.S....and in the host countries themselves." He further stressed that "...aircraft, ships, and tanks are fundamental to an adequate military force. However, the trained man is still the most important factor in the development and operation of a modern military establishment."⁹ This training, he believes, prepares future leaders in these foreign countries, exposes them to American values and institutions, and leads "...to an understanding and rapport which is of lasting value."¹⁰ Also, the exposure via U.S. training programs to democracy and to the role of the military in American society is beneficial to the Latin American officer, so asserts former Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird. Additionally, he feels that this U.S. training is not "...related to overthrow of governments, but on the contrary is aimed at maintaining internal security and stability in order that economic progress can be achieved."¹¹

The Purpose of the Study

The values that can be realized from these U.S. military training endeavors in Latin America as funded under the grant

military assistance program are evident in the statements made by these distinguished political and military leaders. Confidence in these programs has been imbued in these U.S. leaders due to the positive results that have been gained by the U.S. and allied nations from past programs. These training programs have been quite diversified and have included instruction in such military skills as counterinsurgency operations and control of civil disturbances as well as in more civilian-related skills such as well drilling, road and bridge construction, medical technology, and disaster relief. In the past, these programs have served as an effective, enduring, and inexpensive means of accomplishing U.S. foreign policy objectives in Latin America. Yet as Martin Needler, an expert critic of U.S. foreign policy in Latin America, has noted, past objectives of U.S. military assistance endeavors in that region "...have frequently operated at cross-purposes to each other." In attempting to maintain good relations with the Latin American military, these U.S. programs "...have been made to serve short-run political purposes, to bolster governments, or to punish them."¹² In the past, this short-term orientation has produced a notable inconsistency and a counterproductiveness in U.S. military assistance policy in Latin America which in turn, has brought frustration to U.S. political and military leaders and has wasted U.S. taxpayers' dollars. In this regard, the U.S. does not always realize the productive, long-term values from its military training programs as espoused by the U.S. political-

military elite. Such an example of these counter-productive results occurred in a U.S. military assistance training venture in 1969 in the Republic of Panama. This specific program involved U.S. Army personnel stationed in the Canal Zone who conducted training for selected noncommissioned officers of the Guardia Nacional (GN), Panama's only armed police and military force. Initially, the U.S. did gain some political and military success from the program, but over a span of almost four years subsequent to its completion, the initial success that was achieved by the U.S. has been completely erased. Resultantly, the program has without a doubt proved to be of more value to Panama and has yielded more personal success for Panama's military dictator, Brigadier General Omar Torrijos, than it has for the United States. Within the first year after the completion of the training effort, the immediate success gained by the U.S. appeared to be enduring; however, by mid-1970, political events in Panama began to negate this success. Today, as evidence of this diminution, General Torrijos is occupying a very strong position as military dictator of Panama. Under his leadership "calm" and "prosperity" have been brought to the nation, but only at the "expense of freedom."¹³ Additionally, U.S.-Panamanian politico-military relations have deteriorated since mid-1970. Recently, this was quite evident by the strong anti-U.S. rhetoric used by Torrijos, his foreign minister, and his representative to the U.N. Security Council prior to and during that organization's meeting which was held in Panama at

Torrijos' request in March, 1973.¹⁴

Considering this decline in U.S.-Panamanian rapport, the purpose of this study is to accent the actual politico-military success gained by Torrijos from this U.S. training program as well as to point out the counter-productive, long-term results accrued by the United States. Armed with this concrete evidence, the conclusion that this study describes is that even though this specific "short-run" program in Panama was detrimental to the U.S., these training programs still have potential value for the U.S. in consonance with a viable security assistance program in Latin America. However, as was the case with Panama, this value will not be realized until U.S. decision-makers carefully consider from a long-term perspective all the politico-military ramifications involved in the future application of security assistance programs to Latin American governments. Rendering military assistance on a short-term basis to Latin American governments whose leaders' true intentions are dictatorial or anti-U.S. can be very counter-productive for the U.S. as was shown by the Panamanian program where this aid merely strengthened a military dictator's position and led to a worsening in diplomatic relations between the two nations.

Needler has wisely pointed out that any effective U.S. foreign policy in Latin America must bring "...long-term interests and aspirations of the United States...into harmony with the interests of the peoples of Latin America."¹⁵ From a future perspective, military dictatorships and uncooperative relations

do not seem to be compatible with the "interests and aspirations" of the majority of Americans and Latin Americans and do not appear to be in consonance with cherished inter-American values and life styles. From a past perspective, U. S. military assistance programs as a vital part of U.S. foreign policy have not always been productive. Many times, as was the case in Panama, U.S. decision-makers applied these programs to Latin American nations for "short-run political purposes" and in turn, often achieved negative or counter-productive results. Thus, what is needed is a more viable, consistent, and effective U.S. security assistance effort in Latin America in order to allow U.S. foreign policy to be more meaningful and more fruitful.

Today, the Nixon Doctrine appears to be a viable alternative in realizing an effective U.S. foreign policy in Latin America as compared to past policies. Since the military plays an important role in most of the Latin American governments, the Nixon Doctrine wisely purports to deal realistically with these governments and their "new militaries," to adhere to a "low profile" approach to U.S. assistance, to phase out costly grant materiel programs, and to stress more of a partnership, self-help concept for total national development.¹⁶ This policy when compared to past policies seems to offer a more consistent and practicable means of harmonizing U.S.-Latin American relations and in turn, of improving inter-American relations. Yet, Needler has noted that the Nixon years have produced "...a period of drift in inter-American relations" due to "...lack of

a clearly defined Latin American policy or even any real interest in the area."¹⁷ Additionally, he has stated that what policies Nixon has made have not been supported by "positive acts" or "overt actions" which could make his approach more meaningful and more productive.¹⁸ In this regard, U.S. training programs coupled with a more realistic security assistance effort can be one of these "positive acts" to help make the Nixon Doctrine in Latin America a more realistic, yet progressive policy. However, to achieve consistent, long-term success from this policy, these military programs must be selectively applied to only those "...governments with which the United States has strong political sympathies."¹⁹ In this manner, the masses within these Latin American nations would more than likely benefit from these programs and the politico-military relations between the U.S. and these nations would have a better opportunity to improve, rather than deteriorate. Nonetheless, before these security assistance programs are approved for these more U.S.-oriented governments, there is a very key step which must be taken by U.S. political and military decision-makers in order to avoid similar counter-productive results for the U.S. as were achieved in Panama. This U.S. decision-making elite must as Needler has noted "...look beneath the surface of the niceties of formal relations to the underlying objectives of the revolutionary government...."²⁰ If this had been meticulously done in Panama in 1969, the U.S. training program for Torrijos would undoubtedly never have been approved due to his hidden dicta-

torial motives and goals; consequently, this "short-run" program was eventually very counter-productive for the U.S..

Despite these negative results, as this study emphasizes, future U.S. military training programs do have positive potential value in Latin America as an integral part of a more effective security assistance effort. These programs can yield productive long-term results if they are selectively applied to those more U.S.-oriented Latin American governments and if U.S. decision-makers carefully "look beneath the surface" to find the true motivations of these Latin American leaders before approving the programs. If these intentions of the Latin American elite are not in consonance with U.S. foreign policy objectives, the requested U.S. military assistance should be denied.

To emphasize these conclusions, this study first focuses on Panama which is an excellent example of the counter-productiveness that can be achieved via "short-run" U.S. military training programs in which the U.S. leaders did not look beyond "the niceties of formal relations." In this section, Panama's strategic importance and her political-military background are discussed in addition to the political situation and the military today under the Torrijos' regime. This focus is taken to contribute to a deeper comprehension of Panama's behavior in the international political system and to set the politico-military stage for the U.S. training program conducted there in 1969. Subsequent to this discussion, an evaluation is made of

the total U.S. military assistance effort in Latin America during the recent past and present as well as of what U.S. security assistance policies are needed for the future. This is done to promote a better understanding of the overall U.S. military assistance policies and expenditures and to recommend the needed policies and programs in that region which would be reflective of the true needs and desires of the Latin American people and would be in consonance with U.S. foreign policy objectives.

Following this evaluation, the discussion centers on Panama's Guardia Nacional and the actual U.S. training program conducted for that unit. This section outlines the GN organization, the origins and mechanics of the program as well as the politics involved in its inception. Lastly, the concluding section points out the success gained by Torrijos from the program and the counter-productive results that the U.S. realized from it. Subsequently, emphasis is placed on the potential, long-term value that future U.S. military training programs in Latin America in consonance with a viable security assistance program can yield if certain guidelines are followed by the U.S. political and military decision-makers.

CHAPTER I

FOOTNOTES

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15. Needler, op. cit., p. 112.

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CHAPTER 2

PANAMA: LATIN AMERICAN LYNCHPIN

Strategic Importance

Even though a small (about half the size of Florida), weak nation of 1.5 million people, Panama has become a very important actor in the international political system. Since its discovery in 1501 by the Spanish, Panama has played a vital role in world commerce, international relations, and military strategy. With the defeat of the Spanish in 1821, Panama was placed under the control of Colombia and subsequently, with political and military support from the United States, received her national independence from Colombia in 1903. With U.S. construction of a canal across the Isthmus completed in 1914, the strategic location of Panama gave her even more of ". . . a disproportionate prominence in regional and international politics."¹ Today, this U.S.-controlled and operated canal provides an indispensable facility for inter-oceanic commerce for many nations of the world and affords the United States a vital security device for its own national security. The commercial benefits that the U.S. derives from the canal are shown in the fact that approximately 70 percent of the 12,000 ships which annually transit the canal for commercial purposes are enroute to or from U.S. ports.² Militarily, the canal has given the U.S. a vital transport route during the two World Wars and the other military conflicts and crises to include Vietnam. Panama,

with its lucrative geographical position and strategically-valuable canal which links the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, has become an international point of interest (see Map 1). Recent examples accenting this interest have been Japan's desires for a larger canal to accommodate its gigantic commercial fleet and the Soviet Union's expanding naval interests as well as her interests in extending her sphere of influence into Latin America. However, the U.S. has the sovereign rights, power, and authority over the canal and the ten-mile wide strip of land surrounding it. This fact, too, has brought international focus to Panama with the convening of the U.N. Security Council in Panama in March, 1973, which only added fuel to the U.S. vs. Panama sovereignty fire over the Canal Zone. Presently, the U.S. foreign policy decision-making elite believes that any ceding of U.S. control over this strategic facility would possibly invite another Cuban missile crisis or a takeover of the canal similar to the Suez crisis in 1956.³

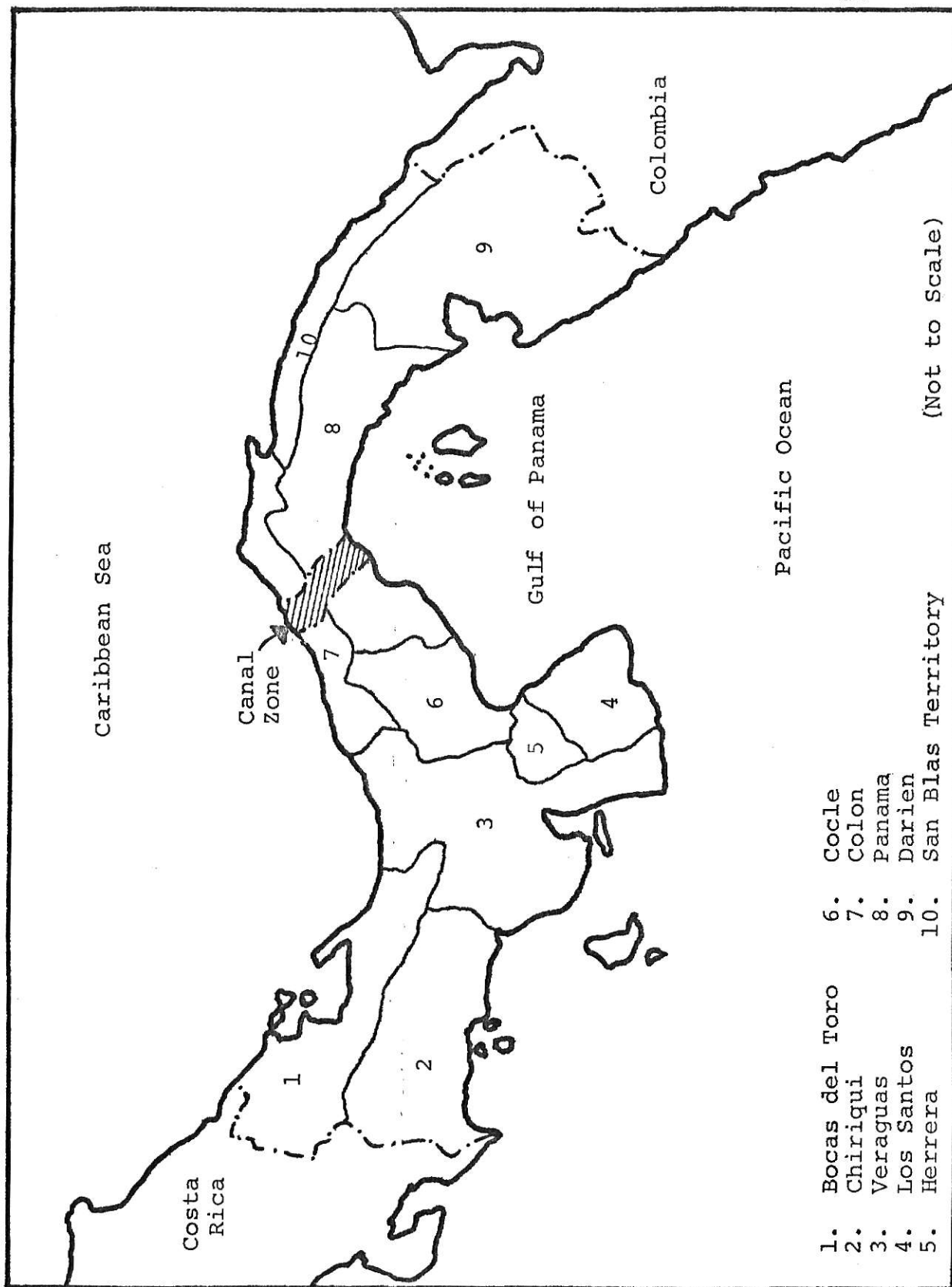
The reality of these possible subversive threats is shared by a strong bloc of U.S. Congressmen. One of them, Daniel Flood of Pennsylvania, has stated that U.S. control and protection of the strategic Panama Canal ". . . is just as vital to national defense as the protection of Delaware Bay or San Francisco Harbor."⁴ U.S. investment in the Canal Zone in terms of dollars has been another reason for maintaining control of the canal. As of 1971, the U.S. had paid the Republic of Panama approximately \$50 million in gratuities and \$5 billion had been invested in the actual canal.⁵ Additionally, U.S.

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Map 1

PANAMA



security interests have resulted in the construction of several U.S. military bases in Panama. As of 1964, this U.S. military establishment in Panama had been erected ". . .at a cost of \$760 million and included several air fields and army bases, training grounds, jungle warfare school, facilities for instruction in guerrilla subversion, and a hemispheric command center."⁶

Naturally, because of the strategic value of the canal and the U.S. investment in the Canal Zone, the United States wants the area securely defended and the canal efficiently operated and administered. Yet, Panama demands sovereignty and exclusive jurisdiction of the canal area which the U.S. received "perpetual sovereignty" over as a result of the 1903 canal treaty. It is obvious that security problems would face the U.S. and other Western Hemisphere nations if control of the canal would fall into the hands of any hostile force. Denial of U.S. naval vessels from transiting the canal would be disastrous and curtailment of commercial shipping both to and from the U.S. ". . .would result in increased costs to the U.S. consumers" due to the added miles that alternate routes would necessitate.⁷

Thus small, weak Panama which connects two continents and separates two oceans looms as a very strategically-important international link because of its vital functioning in global commercial traffic, military movement, and inter-American security. Panama's quest for sovereignty of the Canal Zone and the steadily increasing encroachment of predatory powers

in Panama have only added to the dilemma of the United States and its strategic "colonial enclave" which supposedly ". . . divides Panama into two parts preventing the political, economic, and social integration" of the nation.⁸ Today, a politically-sensitive situation has developed in Panama which is not only of concern to the U.S., but also, to all of the actors in the international political system.

Political-Military Background (1903-1968)

The strategic value of Panama was evident to the U.S. during the Gold Rush days of the 1850's when the transisthmian railroad was constructed to accommodate traffic from the east and west coasts of America. Also, U.S. naval operations during the Spanish-American war emphasized to the U.S. the need for a U.S.-controlled inter-oceanic canal in Central America. This need intensified U.S. interests in Panama and eventually resulted in U.S. political and military support of that nation in its separatist movement from Colombia in 1903. As a remote constituent part of Colombia, Panama sought and gained independence after Colombia's hesitancy in ratifying a U.S.-Colombian treaty (Hay-Herran), signed in January, 1903. This treaty was devised because of the French failure in the late 19th century to dig a sea-level canal across Panama, by subsequent adept lobbying efforts in Washington by the chief French engineer (Philippe Bunau-Varilla) of that unsuccessful project in convincing the U.S. to assume the canal construction, and by intense U.S. interest sparked by President Theodore Roosevelt for an

inter-oceanic canal. In the Colombian treaty, the U.S. was to get administrative control of a six-mile wide strip of land in Panama for one hundred years to construct and operate a canal. In return, Colombia would receive specified payments and annuities from the U.S. for use of this Panamanian land. By November, 1903, Colombia still had not ratified the signed treaty and Panamanian revolutionists had decided to separate from Colombia and to gain these U.S. concessions for themselves. Thus, on November 3rd, aided by the presence of U.S. ships and troops which prevented Colombian troops from reaching Panama City, independence was attained. On November 6th, the U.S. recognized the new de facto government of Panama and Bunau-Varilla became Panama's representative to the U.S. in negotiating a new canal treaty. In his hastiness to negotiate a treaty, mainly because of the expected and unwanted arrival of a Panamanian contingent to assist him, a very concessional treaty (Hay-Bunau-Varilla) for the U.S. was signed on November 18, 1903. This treaty contained the political irritants for the Panamanians which have caused the strained relations that exist today between the U.S. and Panama. In this treaty, the egotistical Frenchman Bunau-Varilla modified the original treaty with Colombia to read sovereign rights "in perpetuity" over a ten-mile wide strip of Panamanian land. Also, Panama was to become "a de facto protectorate" of the U.S. which allowed for the American guarantee of Panamanian independence and the right for American intervention in the domestic affairs of Panama. As

compensation, Panama received \$10 million and an annuity of \$250,000 to commence nine years subsequent to treaty ratification. Colombia was not compensated for her loss of Panama until 1921 when she received \$25 million from the U.S.⁹ Thus, in the early decades of Panamanian independence, this uniquely conceived and signed treaty of 1903, had important political ramifications. It allowed the U.S. to exert ". . .a dominant political influence in Isthmian affairs that was not only openly acknowledged but sometimes even requested by Panamanian officials."¹⁰ It was not until the late 1920's that this pattern of U.S. intervention changed to an unofficial U.S. policy of much less direct intervention.¹¹

With the 1930's, came President Franklin Roosevelt's cordial policies and increased Panamanian demands for more concessions. Thus, the first major revision of the 1903 treaty was approved in 1936 (Hull-Alfard Treaty) which abrogated the U.S. guarantee of Panama's "independence and concomitant right of intervention."¹² Additional Panamanian appeasement was attained by a second major treaty revision in 1955 which was vigorously pursued by President Jose Remon, an ex-commander of the Guardia Nacional. An increased annuity and equality in minimum wages were two of the major concessions of this revision. With Remon's assassination that same year and the Egyptian takeover of the Suez Canal in 1956, the sovereignty issue in Panama again became a source of increased canal tension. Panamanian demonstrations in 1958, anti-U.S. protests in 1959, and major

Canal Zone rioting in 1964 were traceable to this issue of sovereignty. With the 1964 riots, renewed demands for a totally new canal treaty began and by early 1973, bilateral negotiations had not produced a mutually-acceptable treaty.¹³ Currently, the U.S. and Panama are in the fourth round of negotiations since 1964. Thus, the characteristics of minimum violence and militarism which marked Panama's history in its first few decades were gradually replaced by the tendency "...toward an increasing use of violence and military action in political decision-making."¹⁴

There is no question that the United States has heavily influenced Panamanian politics and economy. Yet, Panamanians really have developed some of their own distinctive political patterns because of certain geopolitical factors, economic determinants, demographic conditions, social cleavages and governmental leadership. These factors have meshed to produce a unique environment for political development and one that has been fairly stable, less militant, and less violent than other Latin American nations. These distinctive political patterns which have emerged from the 1903-1968 Panamanian milieu are noteworthy and enhance understanding of Panama's political behavior. These patterns include the fact that oligarchical political dominance was the rule and was distinguished by unique demographic and ethnic cleavages; the middle and lower classes had little voice in politics; nationalism, as used by adept politicians, united the people on several occasions; paternalism marked the political development and the economy; personalismo

and machismo of a political leader were more important than issues in winning elections; devious electioneering techniques frequently characterized these elections; presidents had a short tenure; political parties were unprogrammatic; interest groups and other political forces were unorganized and ineffectual; and the military played an increasingly important role in politics with the diminution of the U.S.-arbiter role in Panama.

Militarily, Panama traces its beginning to 1903 when a battalion-sized army of infantry troops was officially declared the security force for the new Republic. Formerly a unit under Colombian rule, this battalion was disbanded in 1904 because of political reasons and a Cuerpo de Policia Nacional (National Police Force) was formed in that same year with a strength of 700.¹⁵ Until the 1930's, Panama did not require a large police force or army due to the security afforded by the U.S. in maintaining public order in Panamanian domestic crises due to the 1903 treaty. This new police force consistently totaled approximately 1000 members or less until the 1930's, when U.S. non-intervention became a reality. As was the practice in politics, personalismo also spilled over into the police corps, with the rewarding to top police positions to those loyal, influential presidential supporters. Thus, seizure of political power or military influence in politics were unheard of until 1949. With the 1930's, the power and position of the police corps steadily began to increase. This was clearly shown in the late 1940's

and early 1950's, when the police corps' commander (Jose Remon) overtly influenced political behavior and finally won the 1952 election as president. With Remon, Panamanian political power finally shifted from the traditional civilian oligarchy to this former policeman who, in turn, pursued social and economic reform for his nation until he was assassinated in 1955. As president, he also was the overall Commander in Chief of the police corps and he changed the name of it in 1953 to the Guardia Nacional. Soon Panama's only armed force, now commanded by Bolivar Vallarino, ". . . found itself supporting an administration committed to social reform, political honesty, and economic development."¹⁶

With Remon's unsolved death in 1955, the political power shifted back to the oligarchy with the 1956 election. From 1956 to 1968, the efficient and professional Guardia Nacional showed reluctance in intervening in political matters or in taking an independent political stanch, although it did support the preservation of the conservative governments during that period. It was not until the confused 1968 election that this role quickly changed. When the newly-elected president, Arnulfo Arias, wantonly abused his power as Commander in Chief of the GN by reshuffling key, senior GN leaders and by placing his military aide as its commander, intervention by the displaced leaders and other GN personnel in October, 1968, resulted in a complete military coup.¹⁷ Earlier in 1968, Brigadier General Vallarino, the professional commander of the GN had announced

his retirement. When Arias assumed the presidency on October 1, 1968, and announced his intentions of changing GN leadership, a coup was quickly organized by the soon-to-be transferred senior officers. Fearing Arias' well-known past dictatorial tendencies, the GN-backed coup deposed Arias on October 11, 1968, and established a provisional junta controlled and headed by Colonel Jose Maria Pinilla, one of the officers to be transferred. Eventually, Lieutenant Colonel Omar Torrijos (now Brigadier General) emerged as the strongman behind the military-controlled government. General Vallarino remained in retirement and Arias' original choice for Brigade Commander, Colonel Bolivar Urrutia, joined the two-man junta.¹⁸ Thus, once again, with the shift of political power back to GN as in 1952, the GN became an independent political faction of considerable influence in its nation's development. Except for these two periods of overt political support, the Guardia had been notably nonpartisan, responsive to civilian control, nonviolent in maintaining public order, supportive of only status quo political factions, and known for its lack of a specific political ideology or program of its own. With this politico-military background of Panama in mind, the next section focuses on the present political and military situation in Panama under the leadership of General Torrijos, the strongman who has adeptly maneuvered to the position of military dictator of his nation.

Politics and the Military Today (1968-1973)

Gino Germani and Kalman Silvert have noted that in some

Latin American countries ". . .their social development into national states lagged behind formal independence and it is only now that a few of them are reaching a stage of full nationhood."¹⁹ Today, Panama with only seven decades of independence certainly falls into this category. Still in the transitional process of breaking down its traditional social structures, Panama is being led on its path to modernization by a "vanguard army" which emerged from the 1968 coup. This military vanguard as epitomized by the Guardia Nacional projects an "elitist image" in that its military leaders believe they are ". . .more devoted and better equipped to pursue those values which are thought to be the appropriate goals of the community."²⁰ Led by General Torrijos and his "vanguard army", Panama with its new military leadership is faced with the realities of a "dual character" society, common to many Latin American nations.²¹ With social and geographical cleavages between the urban and rural segments of society and the chasms between the "socially 'developed' higher and middle strata" and the "'backward', more primitive, lower strata," General Torrijos has been faced with a difficult transitional task of moving his nation from a politically and economically retarded state to a modern, competitive nation which depends less on traditional U.S. paternalism. Today, even though ". . .success of a vanguard army demands that it transfer authority to civilian leaders," General Torrijos as "custodian of the state's highest values" for over four years, does not appear likely to transfer his authority

to them.²²

When Colonel Pinalla took over the presidency of the provisional military junta government in 1968 subsequent to Arnulfo Arias' removal and exile, he promised free elections in the near future. In the interim, arrest and exile of several key political leaders in the short-lived Arias' regime were immediate items on Pinalla's agenda. Also, the National Assembly was disbanded, the Constitution was cancelled, political parties were declared extinct, the university was closed and purged, and the mass communications facilities were brought under governmental control. By March, 1969, it became apparent that the real strongman who emerged from this coup was the new commander of the GN, Colonel Omar Torrijos and that Colonel Pinalla, as president of the junta, was only a figurehead in the political control of Panama. This was further evidenced by Torrijos' self-promotion to Brigadier General. However, an overt clash came in December, 1969, while General Torrijos was in Mexico. Several of his chief deputies in the GN informed him that he had been replaced and they had offered him monetary remuneration to stay in Mexico. Defying this offer, Torrijos flew back at dawn to Panama, gathered some loyal supporters, and marched into Panama City to regain control. Via national television coverage, he became a national hero.²³ This blatant act of traditional machismo won the hearts and minds of the Panamanian masses. Unfortunately, Colonel Pinalla and Colonel Urrutia, the governing junta members, did not oppose this

countercoup and therefore, General Torrijos replaced them with two civilians.

From the original repressive measures of the post-coup days which were enacted in order to consolidate control of the government, General Torrijos, the 44 year-old son of a school teacher, has added some measures of his own. He has directly lashed out against oligarchical dominance via his personal attacks on agrarian reform and reform of banking and tax collection systems.²⁴ By 1971, the Torrijos' government was stressing economic and political goals favorable to the middle and lower classes. More recently, Torrijos has personally led efforts to mobilize the masses via his frequent helicopter jaunts to the interior regions and has urged consolidation of labor unions into one national organization. Also, plans to correct the interior-urban imbalance have been made an integral part of his national development planning. In contrast to the traditional political patterns, a substantial middle class is now emerging a la Torrijos' influence. Several of its members have attained power positions, especially via the Guardia, but this has been primarily an individual rather than a group achievement. Lower class support is being actively sought by General Torrijos, but as of yet, no powerfully-organized proletariat seems likely to develop in the near future to wield strong political power. Daniel Goldrich has noted that the present political organization does not ". . .enable the great mass of citizens to make effective use of democratic political

machinery," even though the constitutional electoral process was recently institutionalized in the August, 1972 elections.²⁵

In the initial years of the General's quest to gain firm control of the government and the people, the issue of sovereignty of the Canal Zone was placed in the background. This traditional fuel for the nationalistic flame has recently been used by Torrijos to bring cohesion of the populace and to spark nationalistic fervor among all Panamanian people. This sentiment has been steadily cultivated and clearly voiced by Torrijos and his governmental leaders, especially since mid-1970. This nationalistic movement reached an anti-U.S. pinnacle in Panama's history in September, 1972 when the newly-elected 505-member Assembly of Community Representatives (replacing the disbanded National Assembly) rejected the \$1.93 million annual rent that the U.S. pays Panama for the use of the Canal Zone. This Assembly, which was elected in August, 1972, in the first elections since the October, 1968 coup, convened in September ". . .to elect a president and vice president for a six-year term, to approve a new constitution, and to legalize the de facto powers of Brigadier General Torrijos."²⁶ The Assembly, in rejecting the annuity, cited this action as a notice to "the entire world" that the ". . .strip of Panamanian land known as the Panama Canal Zone has not been purchased, or conquered, or annexed, or ceded."²⁷ Today, General Torrijos is very intent on getting rid of this "colonial enclave" as shown by the increasing nationalistic sentiment and actions. With active

bilateral treaty negotiations still in progress, with a less paternalistic attitude towards the U.S., and with a strong bloc of U.S. Congressmen firmly holding to the original "perpetuity clause", a serious U.S.-Panamanian situation continues to prevail with a satisfactory reconciliation still not in sight.

Torrijos' dictatorial position as greatly increased via the U.S. military training program in 1969 shows no signs of weakening. As he proclaimed in November, 1970: ". . .the principal goal of the Panamanian experiment is to eliminate the politician and implant the revolution as an irreversible fact."²⁸ Even organized interest groups and other political forces such as the Roman Catholic church have been ineffective in bringing pressure on the government since 1971. Heavily influencing the communications media and even purging the Guardia of ". . .more than seventy members of the officer corps," General Torrijos has efficiently controlled any opposition. Thus, despite the fact that the original officers behind the bloodless coup in 1968 feared an Arias' dictatorship, Torrijos has quietly and efficiently created one of his own. Sacrificing freedom of speech and various other political rights, this military dictator has built a power base from support of the underprivileged, has placed new pressure on the U.S. over the sovereignty issue, and has borrowed heavily from abroad. Contending that ". . . every country has to look for its own brand of aspirin to cure its own headaches," General Torrijos has found a brand of medicine which is radically different than the brands used by

his political predecessors.²⁹ With his new military vanguard supporting him, he has brought about ". . .peaceful changes that promote the replacement of old structures," just as he predicted in a letter to Senator Edward Kennedy in 1970.³⁰

The next part of this study shifts from Panama to Latin America. In this section, an evaluation is made of the recent past, present, and future U.S. military assistance policies and expenditures in that region of the Western Hemisphere. With this evaluation, a more comprehensive perspective of the overall U.S. military assistance effort in Latin America is gained and thus, a more meaningful politico-military setting is provided for the discussion of the U.S. military training program in Panama, conducted only eight months after the 1968 coup.

CHAPTER II

FOOTNOTES

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3. Ibid., p. 31.

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14. Goldrich, op. cit., p. 155.

15. U.S., Department of the Army, op. cit., p. 348.

16. Goldrich, op. cit., p. 157.

17. Newsweek, Vol. 72, No. 18 (28 October, 1968), p. 63.

18. U.S., Department of the Army, op. cit., p. 208.

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24. U.S., Department of the Army, op. cit., p. 209.

25. Goldrich, op. cit., p. 156.

26. The New York Times (New York) 11 September, 1972,
p. 14.

27. The New York Times (New York) 12 September, 1972,
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28. U.S., Department of the Army, op. cit., p. 194.

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CHAPTER 3

AN EVALUATION OF U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO LATIN AMERICA

Policies and Expenditures

Since 1945, U.S. military assistance programs in Latin America have undergone tremendous changes as justified by U.S. foreign policy decision-makers. Today, this arm of foreign policy is still undergoing continuous reassessment in attempts to consistently and to effectively accomplish U.S. foreign policy objectives in that region. Although U.S. military assistance expenditures in Latin America have not been as much as in other regions of the world (the third highest region for proposed fiscal year 1973 funds), Latin America still is a vital region which contributes to the national security and economy of the United States (see Table 1).¹ Thus, it is imperative that good political and military relations continue to be fostered and cultivated between these two regions of the Western Hemisphere in order to insure the maintenance of an enduring friendship.

With the military in most of these Latin American nations playing an important role in society and national development, the U.S. should continue to maintain cordial relations with this segment as an important means in improving overall U.S.-Latin American rapport. As Needler has commented: "...they [Latin American military officers] are usually an important political force and may at some future time be in key government

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TABLE 1

ANNUAL SUMMARY OF U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS BY REGION
(Dollars in Thousands)

| | FY 1950- 1965 | FY 1966 | FY 1967 | FY 1968 | FY 1969 | FY 1970 | FY 1971 | FY 1972 | FY 1950- 1972 | Propos FY 19 |
|--------------------------|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------------------|-----------------|
| East Asia | 8,909,393 | 467,513 | 363,836 | 346,323 | 198,754 | 187,926 | 525,403 | 372,906 | 11,372,054 | 542.9 |
| Near East and South Asia | 5,315,324 | 270,099 | 248,492 | 155,663 | 160,560 | 114,859 | 161,408 | 110,228 | 6,536,633 | 142.9 |
| Europe | 14,140,673 | 60,417 | 40,933 | 4,398 | 4,131 | 24,951 | 26,135 | 12,384 | 14,315,022 | 10.2 |
| Africa | 161,217 | 26,160 | 30,727 | 19,398 | 21,070 | 17,300 | 18,573 | 12,807 | 307,252 | 17.9 |
| Latin America | 576,597 | 78,435 | 54,316 | 25,668 | 20,993 | 18,310 | 15,711 | 15,068 | 805,098 | 20.3 |

positions."² By selectively aiding the military and paramilitary forces in those Latin American nations which are more U.S.-oriented, the U.S. can contribute to strengthening their capabilities, to fulfilling their aspirations for a modern military establishment, and as the Nixon policy purports, to providing ". . . internal security needed to facilitate orderly political, social, and economic development...."³ Thus, it is important that good politico-military relations with Latin American governments and their militaries be an objective of U.S. foreign policy and that security assistance programs be continued as a means to promote the attainment of this rapport.

In the past, U.S. military assistance policies and programs in Latin America have often been inconsistent and have frequently yielded counter-productive, long-term results subsequent to their implementation, particularly during the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations. In this section, these results are shown via policies and expenditures of these three Presidents. Then, the needed U.S. policies and programs are proposed which are necessary for a viable, productive security assistance program as one of the major means in accomplishing U.S. foreign policy objectives in Latin America.

From the early 1960's which saw the abrupt Kennedy switch from external defense to internal defense preparedness for Latin American security establishments to the Nixon era with its Latin American policies described by Needler as marked with ". . . an inchoate mixture of sporadic common sense, misunder-

standing, stereotyped thinking, lack of interest, and susceptibility to business pressure,"⁴ U.S. foreign policy in that region has frequently been counter-productive, frustrating, and costly to the U.S. These inconsistent policies and programs have fluctuated from President Lyndon Johnson's expensive grant assistance efforts (\$78 million in fiscal year 1966) to a drastic shift away from these expenditures into a mushrooming foreign military sales program (\$135 million estimated for fiscal year 1973) under President Richard Nixon (see Table 2).⁵

TABLE 2

ANNUAL SUMMARY OF U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE
IN LATIN AMERICA

(Dollars in Thousands)

| <u>Grant Military Assistance</u> | | <u>Foreign Military</u> <u>Sales</u> | <u>Cash</u> | <u>Credit</u> |
|----------------------------------|---------|---|-------------|---------------|
| FY 66 | 78,435 | 44,389 | 7,329 | 37,060 |
| FY 67 | 54,316 | 37,642 | 9,958 | 27,684 |
| FY 68 | 25,668 | 47,717 | 12,113 | 35,604 |
| FY 69 | 20,993 | 31,129 | 8,729 | 22,400 |
| FY 70 | 18,310 | 14,230 | 14,230 | none |
| FY 71 | 15,711 | 113,242 | 62,442 | 50,800 |
| FY 72 | 15,068 | 144,000** | 81,000 | 63,000 |
| FY 73 | 20,300* | 135,000** | 60,000 | 75,000 |

*proposed

**estimated

Additional inconsistencies include U.S. materiel granted and/or purchased by Latin American nations which has varied from the expensive external defense equipment of the 1950's (destroyers, submarines, tanks, planes) to the more inexpensive internal defense weaponry of the 1960's (helicopters, small caliber weapons, jeeps) to a recent trend marked by an intense desire by the Latin Americans for costly sophisticated jet fighters, modern frigates, and the latest radar/communications equipment. Further, U.S. military assistance policies in Latin America have been supported either by direct intervention (Cuba and Dominican Republic) or by a nonintervention, "low profile" approach as thus far practiced by the Nixon administration.

More inconsistencies have been observable in the use of U.S. military assistance as a political weapon to bolster or to punish Latin American governments in order to promote civilian constitutional governments. This ineffective measure of suspending relations and terminating assistance was particularly practiced by Kennedy, rarely used by Johnson, and not zealously advocated by Nixon. In addition, this U.S. assistance has been provided to democratic and undemocratic Latin American governments led by pro and anti-American civilian and military leaders. For example, prior to Kennedy, no hard and fast rules had been made as to which Latin American governments would receive U.S. military aid. Basically, these governments could receive assistance as long as their leaders were ". . . anti-communist and friendly towards the United States."⁶ With Kennedy, the dis-

inction between democratic and undemocratic governments began to emerge as the basis for receiving U.S. military aid as shown by his actions with Peru in 1962, when he ". . .suspended diplomatic relations, stopped the assistance program, and cut off economic aid."⁷ Thus, U.S. foreign policy decision-makers have and have not accommodated throughout the past fifteen years various Latin American governments classified as rightists, moderate liberal leftists, leftists, and leftist-nationalists with U.S. military assistance dollars. Additionally, this U.S. elite has granted or has denied on several occasions military assistance to Latin American military forces on the basis of whether these forces exemplified progressive aspirations or reactionary attitudes. As a result, U.S. military aid has been spent on democratic as well as socialist and nationalist regimes throughout Latin America. Thus, all of these inconsistent policies of the United States have produced unsatisfactory results due to many ill-conceived and unwisely-executed programs in Latin America. Compounding the problem of deriving fruitful results from these U.S. policies has been the fact that Latin America is comprised of many different nations with varying interests and desires. Yet, a more effective U.S. foreign policy must be continually striven for by the U.S. leaders if satisfactory relations with Latin America are to be achieved. In this regard, the Nixon Doctrine can offer a more effective, consistent policy if a more realistic, long-term perspective is taken in the future application of U.S. security assistance to

Latin American nations.

Not only have U.S. policies fluctuated during the past fifteen years, but also the Latin American recipients have changed. Recent years have witnessed the Latin American military becoming more progressively-oriented, more participative in politics, and more desirous of a modern military force. Thwarted in their attempts to procure U.S. jet fighters because of U.S. legislative restrictions and a monetary regional ceiling on total sales and credits extended, the Latin American military establishments have turned to Western European nations for their materiel. Consequently, \$900 million were spent by Latin American governments for these third-country arms in fiscal years 1970 and 1971.⁸ For fiscal year 1972, these purchases were estimated at \$465 million of which \$315 million would be from the third-country suppliers.⁹ This is quite a contrast from 1967-1969, when Latin American nations bought 53 per cent of military equipment from the U.S..¹⁰ In fact, these "lost sales" in jet fighters alone have totaled more than \$135 million in Colombia, Peru, and Venezuela.¹¹ The Nixon administration has taken some measures to offset these "lost sales" by attempting to meet some of these aspirations of modernity. More concessionary terms have been proposed for repayment by the Latin Americans for military purchases from the United States (from ten to twenty years) and the regional ceiling has been raised to allow for more grant materiel assistance and sales and credits. This ceiling is on total military

assistance (to exclude grant training costs) to Latin America and presently is set at its highest peak which is \$150 million for fiscal year 1973.¹² Established by Congress, but waivable by the President, this regional ceiling has fluctuated between \$85 million in fiscal year 1967, \$75 million in fiscal year 1968, and \$125 million in fiscal year 1971.

Another important measure taken by the Nixon administration in meeting the true needs of the Latin American military while cutting budgetary expenditures, has been the shift from grant military aid programs to foreign military sales. For example, in fiscal year 1973, only \$20.3 million is proposed for grant assistance as compared to \$135 million for foreign military sales credits. In fiscal year 1966 under the Johnson administration, the former category was allotted \$78.4 million and the latter, \$44.3 (refer to Table 2). In fiscal year 1973, \$9.3 million of the total \$20.3 million grant program is programmed for materiel assistance with Bolivia, Uruguay, and the Dominican Republic as the major recipients. Other Latin American nations receiving U.S. grant materiel and training, only training, or no assistance during fiscal year 1973 are shown in Table 3. Interestingly, Bolivia is to receive \$4.8 million of the \$9.3 million allocated for grant materiel assistance. The justification for this assistance deserves mention in that it points out the present administration's rationale for U.S. military assistance in Latin America. Bolivia, the executive maintains, has a "...U.S.-oriented President faced with dis-

TABLE 3

RECIPIENTS OF U.S. GRANT MILITARY ASSISTANCE --
FISCAL YEAR 1973

| <u>Materiel and Training</u> ¹³ | | <u>Training</u> ¹⁴ | <u>None</u> ¹⁵ |
|--|-----------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Bolivia | Guatemala | Argentina | Haiti |
| Chile | Honduras | Brazil | Barbados |
| Dominican | Nicaragua | Colombia | Costa Rica |
| Republic | Panama | Mexico | Jamaica |
| Ecuador | Paraguay | Peru | Trinidad |
| El Salvador | Uruguay | Venezuela | Tobago |

sident external and internal elements...it is in the national interest to strengthen the current regime in Bolivia to maintain internal security."¹⁶ During the Kennedy and early Johnson years, this same internal defense justification was used except it was more oriented towards the Castro-influenced guerrilla and overt communist insurgency and was supported by a "high U.S. profile" in resolving these conflicts or in overcoming any aggression.

With the fluctuation of U.S. military assistance policies in Latin America during the past three administrations, the societal role of the Latin American military also has undergone change. Again, this is another factor which has made the task so difficult for U.S. decision-makers in evolving a consistent, productive U.S. foreign policy with regard to military assistance.

As Edwin Lieuwen, an astute observer of the Latin American military, has stated: "In most nations, the armed forces exercise a decisive role in politics, either by assuming direct control of the government or by acting as an arbiter among civilian contestants for political power."¹⁷ More recently, this role has been characterized by a more overt assumption of political power and by a more participative part as a political force in resolving the social and economic problems plaguing their nation. This "new military" which has emerged from the Latin American milieu as contrasted to the more conservative, traditional military ". . . possesses new professionalism and high morale; desires modern weapons; wants greater self-sufficiency; demands improved training and education; knows it is the most competent element in society to solve national problems and lead in national development; and detests insurgencies and incompetent leadership by civilian government officials."¹⁸ As a result of this attitude, military intervention into politics has occurred and as Melvin Laird has noted, this intervention ". . . has been a widely accepted reaction in Latin America."¹⁹ Thus, in the future, it does not appear that the Latin American military will resort to only their "professional functions." This elite will undoubtedly continue to function as a political elite and ". . . act as the unique guarantor of sovereignty in their own nations...."²⁰

In retrospect, U.S. military assistance efforts in Latin America have undergone radical changes which have produced

inconsistency and frustration for the U.S.. Thus, in the recent past and in the present, U.S. military assistance policies and programs have frequently been counter-productive in this less than homogeneous region of the hemisphere. Reasons for this are evident when the various policies and expenditures are reviewed. These policies and programs have been openly marked by a shift from grant materiel programs to foreign military sales, a change from high to low profiles, fluctuations in the use of assistance as a political weapon, the emergence of a new military with new aspirations, an inconsistent regional ceiling, and compromised legislative restrictions.

Future Policy

It does not take an expert to realize that U.S. foreign policy with its vital arm of military assistance in Latin America has often been characterized by a short-term orientation, by inconsistency, by costliness and by a counter-productiveness to the U.S.. However, not all the fault can be placed on past and present policy-makers for not producing more satisfactory, long-term relations with Latin American nations. Yet, among other reasons, there has been too much concern over Castro, communism, imposition of democratic values and institutions, and the hemispheric "big brother" role of the U.S. by these U.S. decision-makers. Nevertheless, for the remainder of the 1970's, the U.S. should strive to achieve highly satisfactory, consistent results from its foreign policy by espousing a more

realistic approach supported by positive, meaningful, and productive security assistance programs in Latin America.

Even though the present Nixon Doctrine goes in this direction, these policies need to be further modified to more adequately reflect the long-term interests and aspirations of the American and the Latin American people without weakening the national security posture of the United States and to be supported by more "positive acts" and "overt actions." As Needler has posited, Latin American governments ". . . coming to power... will reflect popular desires and aspirations. Whether the United States can maintain cooperative relations with the governments of the future will be affected by whether it has acted so as to promote or frustrate these aspirations."²¹ In order to encompass such a long-term, productive U.S. foreign policy for Latin America, U.S. decision-makers should consider several factors before applying future security assistance programs to these nations. First, the autonomy of these governments and their aspirations to have a modern military establishment must be recognized. In turn, this "new military" in Latin America must be dealt with on a realistic basis such as the Nixon Doctrine states. If any disinterest is shown in this influential segment of society, the consequences will be as Melvin Laird has envisioned: ". . . the seeds of political estrangement [will be sowed] with both civilian and military governments in Latin America."²²

Second, U.S. security assistance as an integral part of

U.S. foreign policy must produce more of a long-term, friendly rapport with both the political and military elite in Latin America. In the international political system today, all actors are becoming increasingly dependent on one another. With such a vast, populated region to the south of the U.S., America cannot afford to cultivate long-term ill-feelings with her hemispheric neighbors. Yet, with such amalgamation of diversified nations in Latin America and with each one having different interests, the formulation of an effective U.S. policy is not an easy task. However, one situation to be avoided is frustrating the aspirations of those governments with which the U.S. has "strong political sympathies."²³ Additionally, these more U.S.-oriented governments and their militaries should not be denied U.S. military materiel and/or training for long-term modernization of their military forces nor should these more U.S.-oriented nations be denied short-term assistance when they are confronted with an immediate threat to their internal stability if their "underlying objectives" are in consonance with U.S. foreign policy objectives. By aiding these Latin American nations in this manner, U.S. military assistance can produce more of a long-term productivity which allows the masses to benefit from the programs, improves politico-military relations, enhances national security, encourages the development of democratic values, and fosters pro-American sentiments--all of which are worthy objectives of U.S. foreign policy.

Third, effective, future U.S. security assistance policies and programs in Latin America need to emphasize the complete elimination of grant materiel assistance and the continuation of the foreign military sales program. If the Latin American nations desire U.S. materiel for their forces, then let them pay for it with their own national budget resources. The U.S. "give-away" policy of the past which cost the taxpayer plenty should be terminated and there is no reason why it should not be done so by the end of fiscal year 1974. To continue a viable, yet liberal foreign military sales program, however, the U.S. should eliminate all legislative restrictions to include the regional ceiling. As General Seignious has remarked, these restrictions ". . . have been detrimental to the maintenance of a friendly atmosphere toward the United States. The restrictions are regarded as an affront by many Latin Americans resulting in some loss of support and influence with the Latin American military."²⁴ Thus, the U.S. should not place itself in the position whereby U.S. political and military leaders are deciding what weaponry these U.S.-oriented nations should have. The exception on weaponry, of course, would be nuclear arms or other materiel governed by international treaty. Also, with competition from the Western European countries concerning Latin American military purchases, the U.S. should continue the policy of more concessionary terms for these more U.S.-oriented hemispheric nations in purchasing U.S. equipment. On the other hand, the U.S. government or industrial leaders should not be

allowed to vigorously pursue the promotion and sales of military arms in Latin America. However, the U.S. should make the materiel available to them if they desire it and can afford the purchase price on a cash/credit basis.

Fourth, with this phase out of grant materiel assistance, future U.S. security assistance policy should retain the inexpensive, yet valuable grant training programs. The value and success that these programs have the potential to yield are quite compatible with the objectives of an effective U.S. foreign policy in Latin America. To begin with, these programs can contribute to a nation's internal stability by developing and improving via U.S. training the professional and technical skills of its security establishment. Since the aspirations of this new Latin American military are to have a modern military force, these more enduring and less costly U.S. training programs can be an ideal means in promoting, rather than frustrating their desires. In turn, the U.S. and hemispheric security can be strengthened, more self-reliance can be achieved, needed conditions for socio-economic progress can be created, good relations can be fostered, and an enduring rapport can be promoted by implementing these programs in these more U.S.-oriented Latin American nations. In addition to making these military organizations more competent, U.S. training programs can allow Latin American military personnel to be exposed to U.S. values, institutions, and life styles which hopefully, could result in a more pro-U.S. stance by future leaders in

Latin America. As past experience has proven, any military force needs more than just sophisticated weaponry to maintain internal security and stability. Technically-trained, professionally-competent, and highly-motivated military personnel are needed to efficiently and to effectively cope with domestic disorders which disrupt a nation's social and economic progress. Without this strong security force, General George Mather, a previous Commander in Chief of U.S. Forces Southern Command, has felt that any Latin American nation ". . . could not cope with insurgency, riots, or other threats to law and order and this would encourage militant radicals to undertake campaigns of violence as the most expedient means of attaining their goals...."²⁵ Again, these U.S. grant military training programs can assist in developing such a force and thus, should not be eliminated from the security assistance program as the U.S. shifts its emphasis to foreign military sales.

Future long-term and productive results which include the growth of cooperative relations can be gained if these training programs in conjunction with a liberal foreign military sales program are selectively and efficiently applied to the more U.S.-oriented governments in Latin America whose leaders' intentions are compatible with U.S. objectives. These policies and programs as a part of future U.S. foreign policy can serve as the "overt actions" which are needed to make the Nixon Doctrine more meaningful and more productive. Yet, as the Panamanian training venture proved, the U.S. must be careful in

the application of the training programs in Latin American nations in order not to strengthen military dictators or to worsen politico-military relations, both of which run counter to a productive U.S. foreign policy in that region. Considering the future avoidance of such an unsuccessful U.S. project, the next section discusses the Guardia Nacional in Panama and the origins, mechanics, and politics of this counter-productive U.S. training endeavor for that foreign military unit. It is this very type of end-result which must be avoided in the future application of viable, effective U.S. security assistance policies and programs in Latin America.

CHAPTER 3

FOOTNOTES

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CHAPTER 4

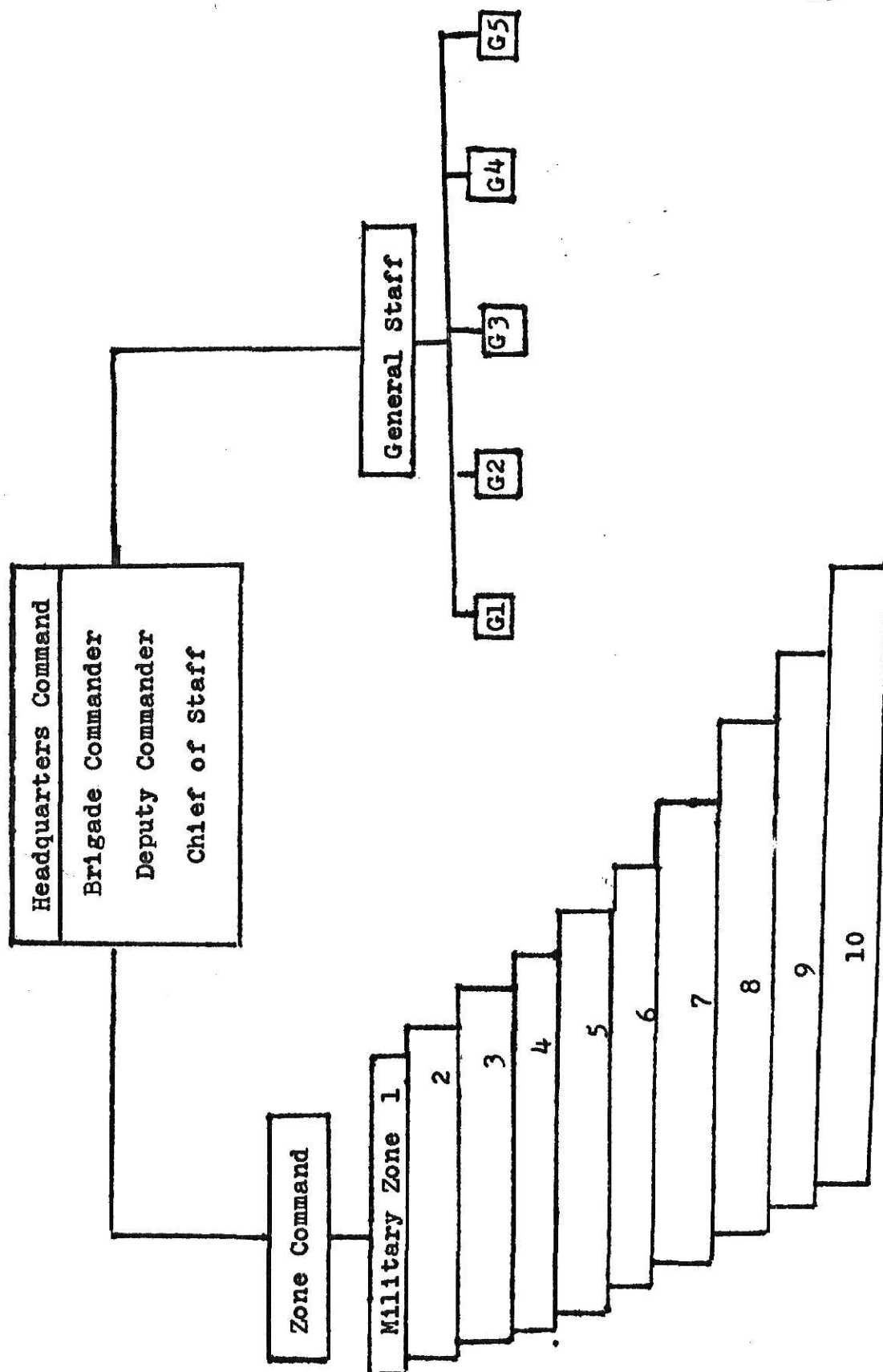
THE U.S. PROGRAM IN PANAMA

The Guardia Nacional

With the 1968 Panamanian coup, the Guardia Nacional proved it was a highly organized and efficient force, capable of overt political intervention and of quick restoration of public order. Since then, under the leadership of General Torrijos, the GN has expanded, has become more professional in internal defense and security operations, and has increased its power in politics.¹ It now has more than 6,500 personnel in its organization, it has counter-insurgency trained forces as an integral part of its force structure, and it has a known lack of tolerance for leftist radicals. All of these attributes make the GN an even more viable and powerful paramilitary force than it has ever been in the past. Today, with this unparalleled strength, it is unlikely that any armed revolutionary force could overthrow General Torrijos, the GN's commander and military dictator of Panama.

The current organization of the GN consists of a Headquarters Command which has the brigade commander (brigadier general), a deputy commander (colonel), and a chief-of-staff (lieutenant colonel). Directly subordinate to this command are the Office of the Zone Command and the General Staff (see Table 4).² The ten zones of the zone command have their headquarters in cities within the nine provinces of the Republic.

TABLE 4

GUARDIA NACIONAL ORGANIZATION

The Province of Panama has two zones located in its area -- Zone 1 and Zone 10 (see Table 5).³ Each zone is commanded by a major or captain with each having an executive officer to assist him. The General Staff is comprised of five main sections with a lieutenant colonel as the chief of each section: G-1 (personnel); G-2 (intelligence); G-3 (operations); G-4 (logistics); and G-5 (civil action). Other departments and units in the GN organization include the Center of Military Instruction; the Police Academy; the Presidential Guard; the Traffic Division; the Air Force; the Coast Guard; the Communications Department; the Transportation Company; the Office of Military Health; the Office of the Secretary; the Legal Department; the Office of Public Relations; the Director of the Penitentiary; the Cavalry Squadron; the Old Panama Company; the Tocumen Airport Detachment; and the Director of Enlisted and Officer Clubs.⁴ The majority of these activities are commanded or directed by majors or captains or in some cases, by civilians and many are directly supervised by the G-3. However, the recent formation of ". . . five infantry companies, especially trained for emergencies...came directly under the Headquarters Command" in 1971, rather than the G-3.⁵

With a strength of 6,500, the GN consists entirely of volunteers and there is no scarcity of applicants for enlistment. Minimum requirements are that they ". . . must be Panamanians and have a sixth-grade education."⁶ There is no racial discrimination in either enlistment or attainment of noncommis-

TABLE 5

MILITARY ZONE HEADQUARTERS

| <u>Military Zone</u> | <u>Headquarters (City)</u> | <u>Province</u> |
|----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Panama City | Panama |
| 2 | Colon | Colon |
| 3 | Santiago | Veraguas |
| 4 | Chitre | Herrera |
| 5 | David | Chiriqui |
| 6 | Penonome | Cocle |
| 7 | Las Tablas | Los Santos |
| 8 | Bocas Del Toro | Bocas Del Toro |
| 9 | La Palma | Darien |
| 10 | La Chorrera | Panama |

sioned officers (NCO) or officer status. The majority of the accepted guardsmen are career oriented. Officers normally have gained their commission as a result of graduation from "military academies of the other American republics." Former commanders Remon and Vallarino entered the GN in this manner as well as General Torrijos and his deputy Colonel Garcia, with the latter two graduating from the El Salvador Military Academy.⁷ Another source of officer commissioning was the U.S. military assistance program in 1969 which will be discussed later in this section. The majority of the leadership for both officer and enlisted members of the GN is drawn from the lower and middle classes. The GN has served as an excellent vehicle for these members in providing social mobility, respect and prestige. Daniel Goldrich has noted that ". . .it is impossible to know whether the Guardia's usual support of the political system is a function of the ideological position of its officers, or of a simple contentment with the relatively good life the system provides it."⁸

Prior to 1957, training for the GN personnel on a systematic basis was sorely lacking. Under Remon's leadership, some progress was made in this direction, but the lack of allocation of funds was always the reason for marginal systematic training and lack of training facilities. Finally in 1954, Venezuela helped to establish a basic training school in Panama for the GN, but this military mission ceased in 1958.⁹ Presently, three months of military police training await the new recruit at the

Center for Military Instruction. Here they become familiar with Panamanian history, regulations, laws, police theories, responsibilities and other military aspects required to be a member of a police-military force. The Police Academy, established in 1960, is the training facility for newly-appointed officers and also, there is a school for training noncommissioned officers. Several officers, to include General Torrijos, have attended the Command and General Staff course at the U.S. Army's School of the Americas in the Canal Zone as well as military schools in other Latin American nations. Many sergeants have attended U.S. military schools in the Canal Zone for short courses involving the operation and maintenance of communications and vehicular equipment. Some have even attended police and traffic schools in the United States.

The annual expenditure for national security in Panama between 1960-70 did not burden the nation's economy. With the GN personnel comprising only 0.5 percent of the total population, the nation's labor force was not adversely affected either. From 1967-1970, the budget averaged ". . . between 7 and 10 percent of total government expenditures."¹⁰ Pay and allowances consistently take a large share of the GN budget with clothing and footwear consuming the second highest amount of funds. With a long-term service unit like the GN, funds have increased substantially for longevity payments to its members, because of expansion in the number of personnel on the payroll. Besides receiving monetary compensation for

completion of incremental years of service, the importance of a career is accented by the award of medals for completion of five, ten, fifteen and twenty years' service. These cherished medals are named after GN officers who lost their lives while on active duty and take on added meaning for GN personnel since promotions are very slow.

In 1970, the monthly salaries for the top three officers in the Guardia were in U.S. dollars \$1,360; \$1,068; and \$878.¹¹ Since 1950, free medical and dental care has been provided to the guardsmen and their families by the use of civilian doctors. The military hospital is a reserved ward of a civilian hospital in Panama City. Social security and monetary compensation comprise the disability retirement benefits. There is a commissary which sells food, clothing, etc. on a cash and credit basis at below retail prices and this operation, in turn, provides revenues for a GN savings and loan association.¹² As comparable to the U.S. military system, the GN takes care of its own members to the maximum extent.

Military intervention has become common practice throughout Latin America and ". . . such a pattern is likely to appear whenever the political stability reaches a point at which the social legitimacy of a regime or a government is no longer accepted by the major relevant groups within the society."¹³ In October, 1968, the GN was a major societal group in Panama and the only group organized with arms. The middle class social origins of the senior GN officers who had experienced

social mobility via the military institution coupled with the fact that Arias, with whom the Guardia had traditionally been distrustful and who wanted them out of the way, was enough to ignite a coup to displace Arias for the third time since 1941. Due to the social importance of the GN in Panama and the efficient role it had played in the past, minimal opposition from the Panamanian people was experienced.

Today, at least half of the more than 6,500 members of the GN are assigned to the Panama City-Colon-Tocumen Airport area which includes such units as the Headquarters Command, General Staff, Presidential Guard, Cavalry Squadron, and the airport security detachment. Conventional police functions consisting of beat duty, patrol cars, and traffic control require much of the manpower in the two cities. A Public Order Company, organized in 1959 along tactical lines to combat internal disorders such as riots and the Roberto Arias-led invasion of Panama of that year, has now given way to the creation of five infantry companies to cope with insurgency or emergency civil disturbances. These companies are manned by GN personnel from various units on an as-needed basis. With Communist agitation in the early 1960's and attacks from loyal Arias' supporters subsequent to his removal in 1968, these infantry companies have provided additional security in maintaining internal stability. Thus, renewed emphasis on counter-insurgency training has resulted in a highly-trained and competent force to counter various internal and external threats to Panama. In 1969, the U.S. military assistance program in

Panama truly added to the GN's expertise in counterinsurgency. Presently, there is no force in Panama capable of wresting control of Torrijos' hold on the levers of the governmental machinery. With the GN's operationally-strong organization and technical competence under Torrijos' leadership, subversive forces stand little chance of success. Again, U.S. military assistance in 1969 to Panama's security force effectively aided in the development of this politico-military strength.

Although U.S. foreign military sales have been minimal to Panama, U.S. grant materiel and training have been the main means of assistance since fiscal year 1950 because of the underdeveloped economy of Panama (see Table 6).¹⁴ One of the first instances of U.S. assistance to Panama's police and military force was between 1905 and 1910 when U.S. instructors were hired by Panama to teach them U.S. police methods. With the establishment of U.S. military schools in the 1940's in the Canal Zone, training of the GN was rapidly enhanced. Through 1964, a total of 1,420 GN officers and enlisted men from Panama had graduated from the School of the Americas. This number placed Panama fourth in total graduates behind Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Ecuador.¹⁵ Instruction at that school shifted to internal security training in the early 1960's. It still emphasizes these counterinsurgency concepts and civic action as an integral part of its curriculum. With the arrival in the Canal Zone of a U.S. special forces unit in 1962, Panama received a new source of acquiring military expertise. Most of the training by the special forces was in the

TABLE 6

U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM DELIVERIES/EXPENDITURES
(Dollars in Thousands)

| | FY 1950-65 | FY 1966 | FY 1967 | FY 1968 | FY 1969 | FY 1970 | FY 1971 | FY 1950-71 |
|---------------|---------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|---------------|
| Latin America | 496,739 | 58,412 | 59,123 | 72,763 | 37,894 | 27,483 | 21,204 | 773,573 |
| Panama | 1,429 | 377 | 468 | 304 | 409 | 404 | 871 | 4,262 |

DELIVERIES OF U.S. FOREIGN MILITARY SALES
(Dollars in Thousands)

| | FY 1950-65 | FY 1966 | FY 1967 | FY 1968 | FY 1969 | FY 1970 | FY 1971 | FY 1950-71 |
|--------------------------|---------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|---------------|
| Latin American Republics | 226,323 | 25,229 | 24,523 | 47,263 | 35,272 | 36,516 | 32,337 | 427,463 |
| Panama | 13 | --- | --- | 6 | --- | --- | 13 | 32 |

form of mobile training teams to the other Latin American countries, but the GN did receive riot control training annually from this special forces unit. With the 1968 coup in Panama, counterinsurgency training became highly desired by the GN and its commander. By the application of politics, General Torrijos was able to convince the U.S. State Department via the U.S. Ambassador of the GN's need for this type of training from the U.S. Army's counterinsurgency elite -- and not from the School of the Americas. With the highly-publicized success of this special forces unit in 1967 in Bolivia in advising the Bolivian ranger battalion destroyed Che Guevara and his insurgency, General Torrijos definitely had ulterior political purposes and goals in mind when he vigorously pursued the idea of training his personnel with the "green berets" of the 8th Special Forces Group. His political motives, goals, and purposes behind this training program, as well as the mechanics of the program, are discussed in the next sections.

The Origins of the Program

By January, 1969, Colonel Torrijos, as commander of the GN, was the obvious strongman behind the provisional junta. His assistant, Colonel Boris Martinez, also wielded considerable power and influence, both politically and militarily. However, early in March, 1969, Colonel Martinez made a speech in which he promised considerable agrarian reform and other semi-radical moves which alarmed the oligarchy. This particular speech displeased both Torrijos and the junta and as a result, Torrijos

assumed ". . .full control, and Martinez and three of his supporters in the military government were sent into exile."¹⁶

Interestingly, Torrijos then promoted himself to brigadier general and reassured the oligarchy that ". . .there would be 'less impulsiveness' in government without Martinez" and that ". . .their interests were not threatened."¹⁷

Later in that same month, the U.S. Military Group (MILGRP) in Panama received a request from GN headquarters requesting a special course be taught to approximately forty selected non-commissioned officers from the Guardia Nacional. It was requested that this course be conducted by the 8th Special Forces Group (Airborne), the U.S. Army's elite counterinsurgency experts for Latin America, who were permanently stationed at Fort Gulick, Canal Zone. At that time, Company B of this Group was operating The United States Army Forces Southern Command (USARSO) Noncommissioned Officer Academy at Fort Randolph, Canal Zone, which was a school for U.S. Army and U.S. Marine sergeants assigned to units throughout the Canal Zone. This academy training was an integral part of their continuing military education and was designed to train selected personnel to become better qualified noncommissioned officers, to increase their knowledge and proficiency, to develop their abilities to assume leadership responsibilities, to broaden their sense of responsibility and increase their proficiency as combat leaders by instruction in and application of advanced military subjects. General Torrijos wanted a comparable program conducted for his

selected sergeants, using the same general program of instruction and mission accomplishment as outlined in the USARSO academy course. However, as per the letter to MILGRP, he desired added emphasis on six major areas: leadership training, counterinsurgency tactics, control of civil disturbances, map reading and land navigation, techniques in military instruction, and military civic action. Torrijos wanted this six-week course started about mid-June.

On April 1, 1969, a letter from the Commander, MILGRP was forwarded to USARSO headquarters, formally requesting this manpower training course and this request, in turn, was forwarded to the Commanding Officer, 8th Special Forces Group for his comments. This proposed training project was more than feasible for the Group since counterinsurgency training was the raison d'etre for special forces and ideal training facilities and qualified personnel were available. Nevertheless, the U.S. Ambassador to Panama was quite sensitive to such training for the GN especially since it followed so closely to the GN's usurption of civilian political power in October, 1968 and the mini-purge in March, 1969 of a senior GN leader. Finally, he did request State Department approval in April and official approval was received on May 5th. On May 13th, the leaders of the academy met with the MILGRP project officer and the G-3 of the GN for the first coordination meeting. After reviewing the academy course outline, as written by the academy staff per the guidance received from GN headquarters, the G-3 recommended

that only one other class be added -- aerial resupply.

The Mechanics of the Program

The six-week program for the GN was organized similarly to the course of instruction presented to the USARSO Academy students with additional emphasis placed on counterinsurgency tactics via practical exercise in the field (see Table 7). Courses comprising this 101-hour block of instruction and field exercise were techniques of the individual in day and night combat, small unit combat formations, combat and reconnaissance patrols, raids, ambushes, land navigation, and combat in urban areas. A total of 87 hours was devoted to general subjects which consisted of instruction in logistics procedures, civil disturbance training, civic action principles, radio and telephone procedures, use of various small unit communications equipment, mortars and forward observer procedures, marching and weapons drill, physical conditioning, U.S. combat lessons learned in Vietnam, obstacle crossings, aerial resupply, and shotgun marksmanship. Map reading with the third largest number of hours (41) had classes in the fundamentals in using maps, aerial photographs, and compasses as well as a land navigation exercise in the field during both day and night in order to test their classroom-acquired skills. Techniques in military instruction were stressed to enhance the students' teaching abilities. Methods, principles, and concepts of military instruction were taught and three presentations by each student on a military topic for 10, 15, and 20 minutes were evaluated by

TABLE 7

PROGRAM OF INSTRUCTION*

| <u>Subject</u> | <u>Type of Instruction</u> | <u>Hours</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|--|----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Maintenance | Conference | 11.0 | 19.0 |
| | Practical Exercise | 7.5 | |
| | Demonstration | <u>0.5</u> | |
| General Subjects | Conference | 30.0 | 87.0 |
| | Practical Exercise | 44.5 | |
| | Leadership Exercise | 8.0 | |
| | Demonstrations | 1.5 | |
| | Field Exercise | <u>3.0</u> | |
| Leadership | Conference | 11.0 | 12.0 |
| | Practical Exercise | <u>1.0</u> | |
| Techniques of Military Instruction | Conference | 14.0 | 35.0 |
| | Practical Exercise | 17.0 | |
| | Demonstrations | 2.0 | |
| | Preparation for Presentations | <u>2.0</u> | |
| | | | |
| Map Reading | Conference | 13.0 | 41.0 |
| | Practical Exercise | 5.0 | |
| | Demonstrations | 1.0 | |
| | Field Exercise | <u>22.0</u> | |
| Tactics | Conference | 16.0 | 101.0 |
| | Practical Exercise | 14.0 | |
| | Demonstrations | 2.0 | |
| | Field Exercise | <u>69.0</u> | |
| Grand Total of Academic Hours: | | | 295.0 |

*Extracted from the Academia De Suboficiales (Academy of Noncommissioned Officers), El Programa de Instruccion (The Program of Instruction), June-July, 1969, p. 1.

cadre members. Maintenance instruction was concerned with the maintenance of personal military equipment of the soldier, vehicles, communication equipment, and weapons. The block of instruction on leadership dealt with human behavior, principles and responsibilities of leadership, leader-subordinate relations, solving problems of the soldier, and combat leadership. As evident by the grand total of hours (295) and the diversified curriculum and courses presented, a vast amount of knowledge was imparted to these GN sergeants in only six weeks. In fact, the students in their end-of-course comments stated that they wished the course had been longer in order to fully absorb the material and to allow more time to study it. Unfortunately, the mission was programmed for only six weeks and the academy had to work around that concrete guidance in designing the program of instruction.

Prior to inception, this program was allotted \$18,000 to be used for operational and administrative expenses. The whole amount was used during the six-week course and these funds were allocated from USARSO military assistance program funds. Initially, forty students arrived at Fort Randolph, Canal Zone on the morning of June 13th to begin this project which was to be taught using training facilities situated in a more remote portion of the Zone. The fort itself was located at the northeast tip of the Zone, contiguous to the waters of the Caribbean Sea, and was the site of an abandoned coastal artillery unit complete with bunkers and World War II vintage buildings which housed

the artillery troops defending the Canal Zone during wartime. With inprocessing of the students, a complete orientation, a physical training test, and a swimming test, the new candidates were ready to receive formal instruction on June 16th.

The U.S. academy cadre consisted of 2 officers, 20 senior noncommissioned officers, and 15 enlisted men, the majority of whom were fluent in Spanish. This was a necessity since all instruction was to be taught in that language. The Guardia provided a small contingent of 1 officer and 4 sergeants to work with the U.S. cadre and to supervise their own students. The students were organized into a company of five squads for the course. Each student could attain a maximum of 1000 points while he was there via tests, practical exercises, evaluations and inspections. A total of 700 points were needed in order to graduate and when the class graduated on July 26th, thirty-nine received diplomas and a distinctive uniform insignia. One member did not complete the course due to illness. A humorous anecdote about this specific graduation date was the fact that it was the same date as the Cuban revolution anniversary and this date, known to many Latin Americans, was inscribed on the metal insignia awarded to each student. The honor student amassed 893 points and the two distinguished graduates achieved 892.5 and 884 points. In addition to these three separate awards, a leadership award was presented to the outstanding student leader (based on evaluation and performance) as well as an award to the outstanding student instructor (based on the

three presentations). The students voted for the outstanding cadre instructor and he also received an award. The deputy commander of the Guardia Nacional, Colonel Ramiro Silvera, gave the graduation address and presented the various awards to his men. General Torrijos was unable to be at the graduation although he and his chief of staff, Colonel Amado Sanjur, did visit the men during their tactical field training as the guest of the Commander, USARSO, Major General Chester Johnson. This tactical field training which was conducted during both the daytime and nighttime took place in a remote area several miles from Fort Randolph. This training area was ideally located on Canal Zone land bordered by Gatun Lake, the jungle, and the Panamanian-Canal Zone border. The graduation exercise itself took on added significance for the students in that 14 of them were promoted to officers and 8 were promoted to first sergeant. This also served as an indication to the U.S. military involved with the course that the Guardia leaders thought the caliber of instruction and the value of the training were quite outstanding. The commissioning and promoting of 22 senior leaders based on attendance and completion of a foreign-instructed school was a tribute to the U.S. cadre for their long hours of diligent preparation and instruction. Initially, there was no doubt that this training program was a very successful military venture; however, the U.S. representatives did not visualize that this success would rapidly diminish for them within a year.

The Politics of the Program

With a knowledge of General Torrijos' political stability

problems, as evidenced during the October, 1968 -- March, 1969 time frame, the political motives behind the request for this particular military training assistance program in retrospect were very discernible. With the military suddenly in control of the country, the GN urgently needed more manpower to retain this control. In this regard, a highly-trained nucleus of senior sergeants would be a vital asset in training future recruits and in improving the overall performance of the enlisted ranks. By professionalizing the GN, Torrijos knew he would be strengthening his military as well as enhancing his political position. Thus, the GN would be better trained to combat subversive and revolutionary elements in Panama and in turn, these elements would be less capable of overthrowing his regime, which was somewhat unstable in late March, 1969. He was aware that these dissident forces which were agitating the Panamanian people could easily endanger his potential political prowess and control of the governmental machinery. With his emphasis on the specific instruction for this desired training program, it was obvious that military competence in counter-insurgency operations, control of civil disturbances, and techniques of military civic action were quite compatible with several of his political objectives. First, since the removal of Arias, border conflicts in Chiriqui province were becoming more numerous. These conflicts involved Arias sympathizers and insurgents who were operating from the sanctuaries of Costa Rica and whose actions were rapidly becoming more violent and

revolutionary. To cope with these disturbances, the traditionally-oriented police force needed more proficiency in military operations, especially counterinsurgency tactics. Second, political unrest still pervaded the country from the coup of 1968 and demonstrations against the military government were common from both the university students and the lower classes, especially in the urban areas. Due to the violent demonstrations during the immediate post-coup months, the university was closed in December, 1968 and this specific government action as well as other dictatorial measures did not totally quiet the student rebellion. Also, the slum districts in Panama City and Colon were scenes of minor rioting as protest to the ouster of Arias. Additionally, political parties were declared extinct in March and therefore, Torrijos was concerned of possible populace-feedback from this maneuver. Third, in order to broaden his base of political power, Torrijos, as a middle class Panamanian, was very cognizant that he needed the support of the masses and by utilizing his U.S.-trained GN personnel in civic action projects, hopefully, this support for his regime could be gained. Fourth, with plans for expansion of the GN and its resultant larger role in the nation's development, additional military expertise was badly needed among the GN's senior enlisted leaders. There was no doubt in Torrijos' mind that a professional, competent, loyal, and motivated elite as trained by the U.S. special forces would become a tremendous asset to the Guardia and to him. Fifth, Torrijos

knew he had to improve the deteriorating relations with the U.S.. He was aware his military-led intervention was very displeasing to the U.S., especially since it took place in the nation where a very strategic, U.S.-controlled canal was situated and in which a democratically-elected president was deposed by the military after only ten days in office. Thus, when President Nixon assumed power in January, 1969, he took a cautious approach in his assessment of Panama's new military leader and Panama's political stability. Initially, the 1968 coup had resulted in U.S. suspension of its diplomatic relations and military assistance in Panama. Also, the new canal treaties as drawn up in 1967 still had not been ratified by either nation and the treaties themselves had been focal points of controversy in Congress. Political, economic, and strategic concern was shown by the U.S. decision-makers with regard to Panama due to the reality that the U.S. investment in the canal could be in jeopardy with the possible nationalization of it by this new military government. Thus, Torrijos wisely took a conciliatory stance to allay U.S. fears on this particular issue. He stated that his government ". . . had no desire to take operating control of the canal from the United States."¹⁸ Additionally, he knew that by demonstrating good political intentions to the U.S., he could more feasibly expect to obtain future U.S. aid for Panama's development. However, he wanted to avoid another U.S. venture into his nation like the "high profile" one in Bolivia in 1967. Thus, a small, inexpensive U.S. military

training program for his GN appeared to be a viable alternative for him in coping with the stability problems of his regime and in gaining any future U.S. support for his nation. Thus, Torrijos realized that a "low profile" approach would be in consonance with U.S. foreign policy and a minimal expenditure of grant military assistance funds (\$18,000) would not be difficult to obtain from the United States. From this low profile, low cost project, Torrijos hoped internal stability would begin to materialize with this increased military competence via the U.S. training program, the canal controversy would be placed in abeyance, the GN would become more modern and professional, and rapport with the U.S. would increase. Sixth, as a result of this training program, Torrijos wanted to strengthen his political stance by gaining more support from the masses. In this manner, he could abolish some of the repressive dictatorial measures that were initially imposed upon the people in order to maintain control and insure order in Panama. Additionally, after gaining this support, he hoped to implement specific plans for making socio-economic progress for Panama which the nation so badly needed. This progress, in turn, would hopefully allow him and his country to become a more self-reliant nation-state within the international political system. Lastly, General Torrijos knew that via this U.S. training project, his military force would greatly benefit just from an understanding of current U.S. concepts, military experience, and tactics which had evolved from U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

CHAPTER 4

FOOTNOTES

1. Daniel Goldrich, "Panama", in Political Systems of Latin America, ed. by Martin C. Needler (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1970, p. 158).

2. U.S., Department of the Army, Area Handbook for Panama, D.A. Pamphlet 550-46 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), p. 350.

3. Lista de Autoridades y Altos Funcionarios del Gobierno Revolucionario de Panama (Panama City: Panamanian Government Publication, 15 July, 1971), pp. 5-7.

4. Ibid., pp. 3-10.

5. U.S., Department of the Army, op. cit., pp. 350-51.

6. Ibid., p. 351.

7. Ibid.

8. Goldrich, op. cit., p. 157.

9. U.S., Department of the Army, op. cit., p. 352.

10. Ibid., p. 354.

11. Ibid., p. 355.

12. Ibid.

13. Gino Germani and Kalman Silvert, "Politics, Social Structure and Military Intervention in Latin America," in Garrisons and Government, ed. by Wilson C. McWilliams (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing, 1967), p. 242.

14. U.S. Department of Defense, Military Assistance and Foreign Military Sales Facts, Defense Security Assistance Agency (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, April, 1972), pp. 7 and 17.

15. Willard F. Barber and C. Neale Ronnig, Internal Security and Military Power (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1966), p. 145.

16. U.S. Department of the Army, op. cit., p. 208.
17. Ibid., pp. 208-209.
18. Ibid., p. 233.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Politico-Military Success for Torrijos

From General Torrijos' initial request in March, 1969, for this specific U.S. military training program to the completion of the project in July, 1969, Torrijos' originally-envisioned goals were attained. In fact, they were achieved in such a successful manner that the final results went beyond expectations. Today, nearly four years after the program terminated, the values gained by Torrijos at the expense of the United States still endure.

Initially, the program provided Panama's revolutionary government and its new military strongman with the desired politico-military rapport with the U.S.. For example, General Mather, who was the Commander in Chief of U.S. Southern Command during the time the program was implemented, testified before Congress on June 30, 1969, that the military in Panama under Torrijos' leadership was "friendly" to the U.S. and that the GN would undoubtedly maintain public order in case of disturbances such as the 1964 Canal Zone riots.¹ With similar confidence voiced by other U.S. political and military leaders in the Canal Zone, the Nixon administration began to show its confidence in Torrijos. Soon, diplomatic relations were restored and U.S. economic and military assistance were increased just as Torrijos had hoped. During 1970, \$11.8 million in

economic assistance was programmed for Panama as compared to \$9.1 million in 1969.² Military assistance totaled \$409,000 for fiscal year 1969 and \$404,000 for fiscal year 1970 as contrasted to \$304,000 for fiscal year 1968 (refer to Table 6). Also, excess U.S. defense articles which had only totaled \$11,000 during fiscal years 1950-1968 suddenly soared to \$5,000 in fiscal year 1969 and to \$62,000 in fiscal year 1970.³ As a result of these gratuitous U.S. actions, General Torrijos wisely moved to reciprocate these political gestures. Realizing that many U.S. political leaders were quite concerned about the susceptibility of the Canal Zone due to his new military government and the unresolved status of the new canal treaties written in 1967, Torrijos took this controversial issue and ". . .played [it] down and generally held [it] in abeyance."⁴ However, this U.S.-Panamanian rapport as furthered by the U.S. training program was short-lived. With an unexpected countercoup in December, 1969, as launched by Torrijos' senior GN subordinates, the General quickly resorted to political tactics designed to regain support of the alarmed masses, to restore cohesion among the Panamanian people, and to reestablish confidence in his regime. These tactics included the use of nationalism and thus, Torrijos relied on the Arias-inspired ploy of attacking the oligarchy and venting aggressive sentiments of the masses toward the United States and its Canal Zone. With a very noticeable deterioration of the initially-established rapport by mid-1970, the past three years have witnessed an even further diminution due to this ultra-nationalistic stanch of Torrijos.

The strength of this stance was evidenced in March, 1973, with the U.N. meeting in Panama which was Torrijos' attempt to focus world awareness on this U.S. "colonial enclave" in his nation. With this bold international move, Torrijos has built Panamanian nationalism to an unparalleled apex.

In addition to the initial rapport with the U.S., Torrijos experienced several other benefits from the training program. As the brigade commander of the GN, he knew that with a more modern, expanded, and professional security establishment, he could better maintain internal stability within his nation. Logically, the best means to achieve these aspirations would be to increase the GN proficiency in counterinsurgency operations, civil disturbance training, civic action techniques, and leadership principles. Thus, this instruction as taught by the U.S. Army's counterinsurgency elite was undoubtedly the answer to Torrijos' realization of his military goals. Individually, the military education level of the 39 GN sergeants reached the highest ever upon completion of the six-week program. Also, coming from all nine provinces of Panama to Fort Randolph, inner organizational GN rapport and patriotism soon increased to a heretofore unknown plateau. This, in turn, strengthened the cohesion among these senior noncommissioned leaders as well as enhanced the political magnetism, power, and influence of their nation's leader and commander who was apparently interested in their professional development. As further evidence of this interest, Torrijos promoted many of

these graduates and this only built more confidence for him in the minds of these expertly-trained leaders. To them, it certainly appeared that this new political-military chief had a genuine interest in their welfare and their nation.

Subsequent to this U.S. training endeavor, General Torrijos soon found his power as the nation's leader steadily increasing. With confidence in his freshly-trained GN personnel, Torrijos launched programs designed to bolster his power base among the rural peasants. He began to construct public facilities for this underprivileged segment of society and began to travel to the interior regions via helicopter to enhance his political image among the rural populace. These civic action programs and political moves were coupled with the GN's competent internal military operations which were effectively coping with the domestic security problems. Resultantly, Torrijos began to experience minimal opposition to his regime and gradually, his political power base began to strengthen. Confidently operating the levers of governmental machinery, Torrijos started to restore several pre-coup rights of the individual. In July, 1969, the university was reopened after this center of agitation was neutralized by the provisional government subsequent to the coup.⁵ By October, some of the constitutional guarantees which were suspended a year earlier were restored. These included "...individual liberty, habeas corpus, and inviolability of private homes...."⁶ By November, Torrijos gained further governmental control by the enactment of decrees listing severe penalties for subversive

activity against his regime. To keep a watchful eye on these activities, he began to use informants, telephone taps, and interrogation centers as a part of his intelligence net.⁷

With this political and military control of Panama as aided by the U.S. training program, Torrijos soon realized a certain measure of socio-economic progress for his nation which he promptly labeled a "social peace." Presently, "The streets of the capital are free of garbage...the gross national product of Panama has reached \$1 billion and grows in real terms at a rate of 4% to 5% a year. Per capita annual income approaches \$625, ranking third or fourth in Latin America."⁸ Thus, from the initial rapport established with the U.S. for political and military reasons, to modernization of the GN at the expense of the U.S., to the strengthening of his power base, and finally, to socio-economic progress, General Torrijos certainly benefited from this inexpensive U.S. training program conducted in the Canal Zone for his GN personnel. For not only did the attainment of these original goals alleviate those problems confronting him, but also, it rapidly strengthened his position as the nation's leader and dictator.

Counter-Productive Results for the United States

Unfortunately, this short-term program which was intended by the U.S. decision-makers to yield more productive and more enduring results for the United States turned out to be a disastrous investment of the U.S. taxpayers' dollars. In this case, the military training assistance program in Panama was

not an effective arm of the overall U.S. foreign policy effort. Rendering such short-term assistance to a military strongman who was motivated by self-interest to become a powerful military dictator with an anti-U.S. orientation points out the short-sightedness of past U.S. politico-military decision-makers. In Panama, these U.S. leaders failed to look beyond the diplomatic facade of this dictator to his true intentions in desiring this military assistance. By bolstering a new revolutionary government under military leadership, this "short-run political" venture produced counter-productive results for the U.S.. Resultantly, the masses did not benefit from this program since it only strengthened a potential military dictator and the good political-military relations between these two nations did not endure since he took an anti-U.S. stance. Nevertheless, there was some temporary success gained by the U.S. from this program. Diplomatic relations were restored, more U.S. assistance was provided as evidence of increased confidence in Torrijos, the canal issue was played down, internal stability began to appear, Torrijos' good intentions for national development seemed apparent, and the newly-trained GN leaders proved to be an asset in realizing a modern military establishment. However, many of these positive values were quickly erased within a year as Torrijos' "underlying objectives" became evident. With the counter coup in December, 1969, led against him by his deputy (Colonel Silvera) and his chief-of-staff (Colonel Sanjur), Torrijos rapidly regained political control via more repressive measures which included a purge of his governmental leaders and

GN personnel. Naturally, the populace became alarmed at such blatant actions, but by mid-1970, Torrijos had restored cohesion among the people and confidence in his leadership at the cost of individual freedom. Thus, this military dictator soon negated the initial success gained by the U.S. from the program and capitalized on the results for his personal benefit.

In retrospect, these similar "underlying objectives" of Torrijos are the ones that U.S. decision-makers must be cognizant of in the future before granting military training and/or selling materiel to Latin American governments. For in cases such as the one which took place in Panama, it would much more advantageous for the U.S. to deny the assistance rather than to provide it to a leader like Torrijos who used the training for his personal gain. Obviously, any counter-productive program like Panama needs to be avoided in future U.S. security assistance efforts in Latin America. What is needed are security assistance programs which produce productive, long-term results for the U.S. and these results do not include insuring repressive military dictators remain in power and worsening politico-military relations.

The Potential Value of Comparable Programs in Latin America

The short-term orientation taken by U.S. leaders in the 1969 Panamanian program was undoubtedly counter-productive and not in consonance with U.S. foreign policy objectives. Yet, the values that can be gained from similar programs in Latin America are too important to justify the elimination of the

grant military training effort. Productive, long-term results have been gained by the U.S. from these training programs and the same results can be produced in the future in Latin America if certain guidelines are adhered to before these programs are approved and implemented. In this respect, these programs can foster friendly relations, can achieve national interests, can harmonize shared values and aspirations, and can obtain the maximum return on the U.S. investment.

The U.S. cannot ignore the revolutionary governments in Latin America, but certainly she does not have to fulfill their requests if they do not have "strong political sympathies" with the U.S.. Further these more U.S.-oriented governments and their militaries must be dealt with on a firm, but realistic basis and before assistance is rendered to them, U.S. decision-makers must attempt, as Needler has suggested, ". . .to look beneath the surface of the niceties of formal relations to the underlying objectives of the revolutionary government, and, without sacrificing essential interests of the United States, try to develop formulas for bringing the two sets of interests and aspirations into harmony."⁹ This definitely does not mean that the U.S. should render "short-run" military assistance to every Latin American nation in hopes that it will foster friendly relations and will accomplish all the other objectives of a productive foreign policy. It does mean that the U.S. should assist those more U.S.-oriented nations if their leaders' intentions do not run counter to U.S. foreign policy objectives, that

is, if the assistance can yield long-term results which enhance the nation's internal stability, benefit the people, and improve diplomatic relations at a minimal cost to the U.S.. If a Latin American nation does not meet this criterion and a realistic reconciliation cannot be reached, then the requested U.S. military assistance should be denied. A program such as the one implemented in Panama does not in any way benefit the U.S. in the long-run. It is much better if such assistance is denied from the outset if the true intentions of a nation's leaders are in conflict with long-term U.S. foreign policy objectives.

If these guidelines are followed by the U.S. decision-making elite in consonance with a viable future security assistance effort as comprised of grant training programs and a liberal foreign military sales program, U.S. foreign policy can be much more productive than it has been in the past. Additionally, the training programs can yield the positive, enduring values as espoused by U.S. political and military leaders. By selectively applying these programs to Latin American nations which meet these guidelines and by selling materiel to those nations which meet this criterion, the U.S. security assistance effort can be a more consistent, less costly, less frustrating, and a more realistic policy in maintaining cordial relations, enhancing hemispheric security, maximizing the long-term benefits of military assistance, contributing to internal stability, promoting mutual understanding, striving for more self-reliance, and exposing Latin American military personnel to American values, institutions,

and life styles. Today, the present U.S. foreign policy needs "positive acts" to make it more practicable and meaningful. With a more realistic security assistance program which includes these valuable training programs being applied to those Latin American governments which are politically sympathetic to the U.S. and with U.S. decision-makers carefully examining the objectives of the Latin American leaders, the desired long-term results can be produced which do improve politico-military relations.

Today, Latin America is a region which attracts the economic, political, and strategic interests of many of the important actors in the international political system. For these reasons, the United States cannot afford to neglect the future needs and aspirations of her hemispheric neighbors. Thus, a realistic, selectively-applied U.S. security assistance program in Latin America can serve as a valuable vehicle in fostering the needed cordial relationships between these two regions.

CHAPTER 5

FOOTNOTES

1. U.S., House of Representatives, 91st Congress, First Session, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Hearings, Foreign Assistance Act of 1969 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969), p. 654.

2. Ibid., p. 234.

3. U.S., Department of Defense, Military Assistance and Foreign Military Sales Facts, Defense Security Assistance Agency (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, April, 1972), p. 9.

4. U.S., Department of the Army, Area Handbook for Panama, DA Pamphlet 550-46 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), p. 208.

5. Ibid., p. 362.

6. Ibid., p. 181.

7. Ibid., pp. 181-182.

8. U.S., House of Representatives, 92nd Congress, First Session, Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Hearings, Panama Canal, 1971 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), p. 53.

9. Martin C. Needler, The United States and the Latin American Revolution (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1972), p. 64.

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THE POLITICS OF A U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE
TRAINING PROGRAM IN PANAMA

by

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B.A., Kansas State University, 1964

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Political Science

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1973

This study examines a particular U.S. grant military assistance training program in Panama in 1969. This specific U.S. army training venture as the study describes was politically and militarily disastrous for the United States. As recent past and present U.S. military assistance policies and programs in Latin America have shown, consistent, inexpensive, long-term results have not always been produced for the U.S.. A prime example of this counter-productiveness evolved from this U.S. military training program conducted in Panama for the Guardia Nacional, Panama's only armed police and military force. Although this program resulted in politico-military success for General Omar Torrijos, presently Panama's military dictator, it produced counter-productive results for the U.S. in that politico-military relations worsened between the two nations.

Despite the disastrous results from this Panamanian program, these U.S. military assistance training programs do have potential value in Latin America in consonance with a viable U.S. security assistance effort. Cordial relations must be maintained with Latin America and since the military within the majority of these Latin American nations plays an important role in government, United States' fulfillment of their aspirations to have a modern security establishment can enhance politico-military rapport. Nevertheless, to achieve maximum value for the U.S. from these U.S. military training programs which are an integral part of the U.S. security assistance effort and to avoid a recurrence of the counter-productive results as evidenced from the training program in Panama,

these programs should be more selectively applied to those Latin American governments which are more U.S.-oriented and whose leaders' underlying intentions are more compatible with long-term U.S. foreign policy objectives.

Today, Latin America is a region which attracts the economic, political, and strategic interests of many of the important actors in the international political system. For these reasons, the United States cannot afford to neglect the needs and aspirations of her hemispheric neighbors. Thus, a realistic, yet selectively-applied U.S. security assistance program in Latin America can serve as a valuable vehicle in fostering the needed cordial relationships between these two regions.