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Honduras

August 1973

NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE SURVEY

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Armed Forces

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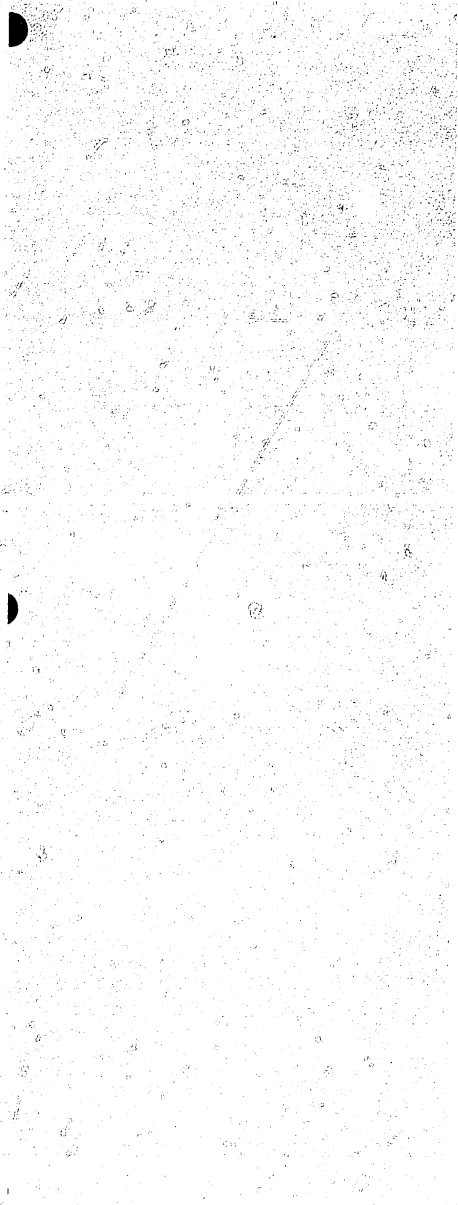
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Honduras

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Armed Forces

A. Defense establishment

The Honduran Armed Forces are composed of both military and police forces. The military forces consist of the Honduran Army, with 10,000 men, generally lightly armed, the Honduran Air Force, with 490 men and 40 aircraft, and the Honduran Coast Guard, which is essentially a paper organization with no appropriation in 1972 and no personnel; its one boat is out of the water. The police element, the Special Security Corps (CES), with 3,000 men, is a purely civil police force. The basic mission of the military forces is to defend the national territory and to assist in the maintenance of internal security.¹ (C)

The Honduran Army is capable of fulfilling its mission if it is not faced with widespread disorder or an all-out attack by one or more of the neighboring countries. Only the three U.S. Military Assistance Program (MAP)-supported infantry battalions (Figure 1) have sufficient training, modern weapons, vehicles, and communications to be fully effective forces. The infantry brigade is poorly trained but too lightly equipped for heavy combat. Four battalions and zone troops have "first line of defense" roles, which include intelligence collection, reconnaissance, and limited combat. (S)

The air force can support ground operations with close air support, airlift, and aerial surveillance. Sustained operations are not possible, however, because of the inadequate maintenance and supply system and limited fuel and ammunition reserves. There is no early warning ground-controlled interception radar and no air defense system in the country. (S)

The coast guard never could provide more than token assistance. It was too small in size (never more than 80 personnel and two patrol boats) to patrol coastal areas adequately, and it lacked sufficient armament to provide effective support to combat operations. (S)

The chief strengths of the armed forces include hardy personnel and generally good morale. Many

¹For current figures, see the *Military Intelligence Summary*, published semi-annually by the Defense Intelligence Agency.

men find their living conditions improved upon entering the military—a factor that may account for the low turnover in personnel. Major weaknesses include old and heterogeneous weapons and equipment, inadequate transportation and communications, low stock levels, a heavy dependence on foreign sources for military materiel, and a poor intelligence system. In addition, there is a high rate of illiteracy in the ranks and an uneven and deficient training program. (S)

For Honduras, the "soccer war" with El Salvador in 1969 was a disillusioning experience, particularly with respect to foreign assistance. When hostilities broke out, Hondurans, considering their country invaded, expected assistance from the other members of the Organization of Central American States (ODECA)—which has the objective of pacific settlement of disputes—and particularly from the other members of the Organization of American States (OAS), almost all signatories of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (Rio Pact), under which they are pledged to assist any signatory victim of attack. Although U.S. military advisers had long been emphasizing internal security as the more valid mission of the armed forces, the Hondurans found themselves faced with armed invasion from a fellow member of both organizations. A small amount of help from their allies was forthcoming, and the OAS did persuade the Salvadorans to withdraw within their own frontiers, but Honduras was convinced that it had received too little too late and that there was little safety in alliances. Since that time, the military has nearly doubled the size of the army and has been purchasing arms and equipment largely from Western Europe. Previously the United States had supplied Honduras almost exclusively, principally through grant aid, but all U.S. support was suspended after the conflict. (U/OU)

1. Military history (U/OU)

The military has never fought a major war but has played an important role in Honduran history by providing at least token resistance to the sporadic interventionist proclivities of neighboring states and

because they fulfill certain formal governmental responsibilities in their unstable country. Throughout Honduras' history of foreign interventions, civil wars, revolutions, and palace intrigues, soldiers have wielded great influence. Despite much rhetoric about democracy, the heritage of the *caudillo* continues to be strong in Honduras.

By law the primary loyalty of the military is to its guardianship of the Constitution. That guardianship is assigned to the armed forces by several articles in the Constitution, one of which states that the armed forces are not to respect orders that violate the Constitution even when they come from their superiors. Military leaders have not hesitated to exercise this prerogative and have intervened when, in their view, the President's actions contravened the Constitution or threatened to undermine the capabilities of the armed forces to fulfill their responsibilities.

In the 20th century, Honduras has tended to follow the leadership of the United States. In both World Wars I and II, Honduras sided with the Allies but took no active role because of its limited forces and resources. More recently, it backed the United States in the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 and sent a 233-man contingent to the OAS's Inter-American Peace Force during the crisis in the Dominican Republic in 1965.

The United States has exerted considerable influence on the Honduran Armed Forces. Honduran military aviation began under U.S. advisers in 1933. Shortly after the signing of the Pact of Mutual Assistance with the United States in 1954, a general labor strike, combined with problems generated from local involvement with exile forces seeking to overthrow the Communist-infiltrated Arbenz government in Guatemala, drove Honduras to ask for assistance. The United States promptly sent a shipment of small arms, jeeps, and larger trucks.

With Fidel Castro's seizure of power in Cuba in 1959, Cuban-sponsored insurgency became an increasing threat in Central America, and the United States helped train and equip counterinsurgency forces in Honduras. The army and the air force completed a combined operation with Guatemalan forces in the Montana Cerro Azul² area along the common border in 1966.

A continuing problem exists with El Salvador because of the quarter of a million Salvadorans and persons of Salvadoran extraction living in Honduras; some of the former are there illegally. A border incident occurred in 1967 between the two countries, and open hostilities, often referred to as the "soccer

war," broke out in mid-1969.³ Although of short duration—about 5 days of actual combat—the hostilities revealed the superiority of Salvadoran equipment and the weakness of the logistic systems of both countries and convinced Honduras it was folly to rely on treaties for protection. In due time, the OAS brought about a cease-fire and a withdrawal of Salvadoran forces from Honduran territory. But the basic problems—a poorly delineated border with Salvadorans in large numbers living in Honduras, and a certain amount of cattle rustling back and forth across the border—remain unsolved, and no peace agreement has yet been signed.

2. Command structure (C)

The President is the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces (Figure 1). He receives advice on all matters relating to the armed forces from the Supreme Council of National Defense, composed of the Chief of the Armed Forces, Minister of National Defense and Public Security, Chief of the Armed Forces General Staff, commanders of the infantry brigade, separate infantry battalions, and military zones, Commandant of the Military Academy, and the commanders of the coast guard, air force, and Special Security Corps.

Under the President is the Chief of the Armed Forces, who exercises operational control over the various army elements, the coast guard, the air force, the Special Security Corps, and the military academy. He is assisted by the Armed Forces General Staff, which in theory exercises administrative control over the army, coast guard, air force, and civil police. In point of fact, unit commanders usually bypass the staff by direct resort to the Chief of the Armed Forces. When the Chief of the Armed Forces is absent, the Chief of the Armed Forces General Staff assumes his duties. Under the Constitution, the Chief of the Armed Forces is appointed and removed only by the National Congress—an arrangement which makes him unusually independent of the President. The Armed Forces General Staff consists entirely of army personnel and serves also as the army staff. It formally exercises staff supervision also over the coast guard and air force, although they have general staffs of their own. Thus, in effect, the other services are almost branches of the army.

The Minister of National Defense and Public Security is charged with procurement and supply, the military budget, and the administration of the military academy.

²For diacritics on place names see the list of names on the apron of the Summary Map in the Country Profile chapter and the map itself.

³For details, see Foreign and National Policies in Government and Politics.

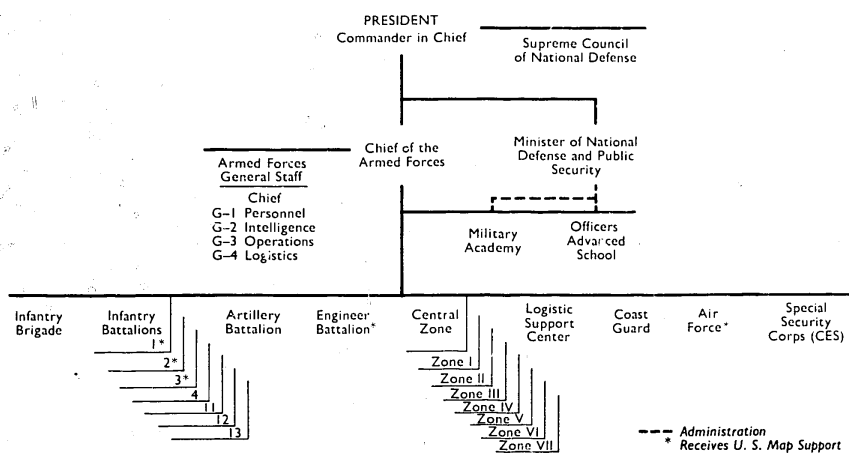


FIGURE 1. Armed forces organization (C)

The Special Security Corps (*Cuerpo Especial de Seguridad—CES*) is the centrally controlled national police force. In 1968, reorganization gave the Minister of National Defense and Public Security operational control over the corps except during times of national emergency, when the Chief of the Armed Forces would assume control. The emergency occasioned by the "soccer war" in 1969 was followed by the corps becoming an arm of the Honduran Armed Forces under the Chief of the Armed Forces, as provided by Articles 46 and 49 of the Organic Law of the Armed Forces, promulgated on 12 June 1971.

The Special Security Corps disposition is according to political departments, not according to military zones, although its personnel frequently work with army zone troops. Its strength is about 3,000 men. About one-third of the force is in the vicinity of the capital, and the balance serves in detachments in towns and villages. Weapons and equipment are not standardized. Men in traffic control in Tegucigalpa have .38-caliber Smith and Wesson revolvers, but other personnel use a heterogeneous mixture of small arms. Vehicles are few, old, and worn out. Fragmented into many small units, possessing little equipment and transportation, and having had almost no training in operating as units, the force would not be much of an asset to the armed forces in a combat situation. In the

event of hostilities, it would serve as a local defense and law enforcement agency and as an intelligence network.

B. Joint activities (C)

1. Military manpower

As of 1 July 1973, Honduras had about 699,000 males aged 15 through 49, of whom about 59% were fit for military service. The distribution by 5-year age groups is shown in the following tabulation:

Age	TOTAL MALES	MAXIMUM NUMBER FIT FOR MILITARY SERVICE
15-19	146,000	95,000
20-24	130,000	80,000
25-29	112,000	65,000
30-34	99,000	60,000
35-39	86,000	50,000
40-44	69,000	35,000
45-49	57,000	25,000
Total, 15-49	699,000	410,000

The average number reaching military age (18) annually during 1973-1977 is estimated to be about 30,000. The illiteracy rate of recruits is 60% to 65%. With a low personnel turnover rate for the armed forces, there is some semblance of a professional

noncommissioned officer corps. In general, discipline and morale are good, but the officers tend neither to exercise initiative nor to delegate authority. The enlisted men—especially those in the MAP battalions—usually receive better food and have better housing (Figure 2) than they did as civilians. The services afford some education and some opportunities to learn skills that are valuable when the men return to civilian life.

By law, all male citizens between 18 and 23 years of age are liable for compulsory military service. In practice, few are conscripted, since recruitment needs are almost entirely met through voluntary enlistments. The terms of service vary somewhat from command to command, but they are normally 18 months except for those joining MAP-supported units, where enlistments are for 2 years. Overall, the reenlistment rate is high, and annual personnel turnover is only about 10%.

There is no reserve system as such. Legally all males aged 18 through 54, except those serving in the armed forces or in the government, are members of the reserve. Units keep records of all discharged personnel in order to reach them in the event of a national emergency. No mobilization plans exist; and, on the basis of national resources alone, the armed forces could not be mobilized much beyond their current strength. On the basis of existing training facilities, cadres, and administrative machinery, the army could mobilize perhaps 35% or 40% more men by M+90 days, if it received logistic and economic support and additional arms and equipment.

In past emergencies the government-controlled airline (SAHSA) has been mobilized as an airlift unit.

2. Strength trends

The strength of the military forces tends to mirror events, with the coup of 1963 reflected by a sizable increase in 1965, the border troubles of 1967 by



FIGURE 2. The barracks in Marcala, in Military Zone IV, is a better habitation than most troops had when they were civilians (U/OU)

FIGURE 3. Strength trends (C)

YEAR	ARMY	AIR FORCE	COAST GUARD*	TOTAL
1955.....	3,000	100	....	3,400
1960.....	3,500	100	....	3,900
1963.....	3,650	350	....	4,000
1965.....	4,700	620	....	5,320
1966.....	4,700	170	....	5,170
1967.....	4,500	140	....	4,940
1968.....	5,388	190	80	5,870
1969.....	5,500	190	80	6,070
1970.....	5,500	190	80	6,070
1971.....	7,000	190	80	7,570
1972.....	10,000	190	0	10,490
1973.....	10,000	190	0	10,490

.... Not pertinent.

*Established in 1968.

another in 1968, and the "soccer war" of 1969 by yet another in 1971 and 1972. The armed forces themselves do not keep meticulous strength figures. The approximate strengths of the various forces in selected years are given in Figure 3.

3. Training

There are no single-service military schools in Honduras except for the air force's Military Aviation School and Mechanics School.

The most significant combined schooling effort is the General Francisco Morazan Military Academy, which is located at Tegucigalpa and serves as a national military academy. The school is operated by the army but trains officer candidates for both that service and the air force. Presumably, the academy will train cadets for the coast guard when they are needed. The program consists of a 3-year course at the academy providing secondary schooling and basic military education, followed by a fourth year in the Canal Zone. Academic standards at the academy are high. Even though cadet applicants are carefully screened, the attrition rate is high, and only about one quarter of those starting finish. Graduates of the program are commissioned second lieutenants; they then receive training pertinent to their own services, usually either in Honduras or in the Canal Zone.

In January 1968, the Honduran Armed Forces initiated courses at the military academy for further training of junior officers, largely to avoid the high cost of training abroad. From the original 8-week infantry-type course in 1968, this program grew to two 4-month courses in 1969, and, on 1 October 1972, the Officers Advanced School (*Escuela de Aplicaciones Militares*), also in Tegucigalpa and under the army.

began offering platoon-through-company-level tactical 5-month courses for lieutenants and captains.

U.S. military schooling, given both in the Canal Zone and in the United States, is an important adjunct of the Honduran military school system. Also, U.S. military training teams provide valuable training in Honduras for the army and the air force. The army has used cadres instructed by these teams to train other units. A small number of personnel attend schools in other Latin American countries and in Italy and Spain.

Illiteracy is a continuing problem in the training of enlisted personnel, and considerable time is devoted to instruction in reading and writing. The need for technical training is minimal in the army and coast guard because of the absence of advanced equipment; the air force has built up a maintenance force of about 140 skilled civilians.

Joint training is seldom practiced. The army and air force have held a few joint exercises over the years, most of them centered on counterinsurgency operations. The combined operations with Guatemalan forces in 1966 and the clashes with El Salvador in 1967 and 1969 involved joint army-air force operations. There are a total of about 200 jump-trained personnel in the armed forces, most of them dispersed in various army units; the only paratroop unit is an air force platoon of 25 men.

4. Military budget

The annual budgets for the armed forces and the Special Security Corps are prepared under the supervision of the Minister of National Defense and Public Security. These budgets are consolidated into

the defense budget and are incorporated in the central government budget, which is submitted to the National Congress for approval. The Congress has the constitutional authority to amend all budgets, but in practice the defense budget is approved as submitted.

The announced military budgets give only fragmentary information as to the allocation of funds on a service basis and no information on a functional basis. The funds allocated to "other military" increased by 34% in 1971 and 150% in 1972; these increases probably were used for the purchases of weapons. In addition, funds for the procurement of weapons and major items of equipment have been provided by separate appropriations administered outside the government budget. For example, at the time of the border war with El Salvador in July 1969, a special defense bond issue of US\$7.5 million was floated, and the receipts were used to purchase military equipment. Annual defense budgets for recent years and their relationship to the central government budget and GNP are shown in Figure 4.

5. Logistics

Honduras has little capability to provide industrial support for its armed forces. There is a small but growing industrial sector, which processes agricultural products and provides some basic consumer goods. The country is generally self-sufficient in food. Uniforms and shoes are furnished by the National Tailor Shop.

The Minister of National Defense and Public Security is charged with the responsibility for procurement and supply. In practice, however, logistics functions are carried out predominantly at

FIGURE 4. Defense budgets (C)
(U.S. Dollars)*

	1969	1970	1971	1972
Army.....	3,085,910	4,322,730	4,763,735	5,000,000
Air force.....	1,100,000	1,350,000	1,750,000	2,025,000
Coast guard.....	70,615	70,615	70,615	na
Special Security Corps.....	1,908,680	2,408,680	2,500,000	2,500,000
Other Military**.....	1,017,285	1,735,165	2,329,130	5,821,780
Total.....	7,212,520	9,887,520	11,413,510	15,346,780
Defense budget as percent of central government budget.....	7.0	8.8	9.1	11.5
Defense budget as percent of GNP.....	1.3	1.5	1.6	na

NOTE: The proposed 1973 central government budget provides the same total for the defense budget as the 1972 budget.

na Data not available.

*Converted at the exchange rate of 2 lempiras equal US\$1.00.

**Includes Offices of Chief of the Armed Forces and Secretary for National Defense and Public Security, pensions, and other transfer payments.

major-unit level. There are practically no central warehouses. Storage and distribution are responsibilities of unit commanders. The shortage of adequate storage facilities precludes the maintaining of materiel reserves. Materiel, other than that obtained through MAP, and supplies, such as food and POL, generally are purchased locally by unit commanders out of regularly budgeted funds. The Minister of National Defense and Public Security is responsible for the supervision of such expenditures, but accountability is lax, and commanders, who tend to profit from the system, are averse to change. Units generally are responsible for maintaining their materiel. Air force maintenance is consistently better than that of the army.

The Logistic Support Center was established in 1967 in Tegucigalpa. It receives and issues all MAP materiel, maintains stock levels, and performs most levels of maintenance on weapons, vehicles, and engineer and communications equipment. In the future, it is planned that this facility will develop information on usage factors, act as a central control point for all spare parts and supplies, and serve as the central purchasing agency for the armed forces.

All military materiel is imported, primarily from the United States, but since 1969 weapons have been obtained from Western Europe and aircraft from several Latin American countries. Until the outbreak of hostilities that year, the United States had been virtually the sole source for military materiel, which was furnished primarily through the Military Assistance Program. Military aid to Honduras was suspended as a result of this armed clash but resumed in 1970 for training assistance only. Since the mid-1950's, the value of United States equipment deliveries to Honduras amounted to about US\$10 million, of which US\$8.2 million was grant aid. Immediately after the mid-1969 hostilities, small arms, ammunition, and aircraft ordnance were purchased from Belgium. In addition, France, Portugal, and Spain provided infantry weapons, howitzers, ammunition, and explosive devices. Small arms are believed to have been obtained from Guatemala during or shortly after the war, and one bomber was purchased from Costa Rica, a transport aircraft from Nicaragua, and six F-86K jet fighters (missing vital parts) probably from Venezuela. In 1972, a C-54 was purchased from Guatemala.

C. Army

The Honduran Army is the senior and most powerful arm of the armed forces. Its mission is internal security and territorial defense. The army can

maintain internal security under normal conditions but would be unable to cope with well organized or widespread disorders. The army is neither trained nor equipped for sustained combat operations. (C)

The major weaknesses of the army include a shortage of modern arms and equipment, an inadequate training program, and a shortage of transportation and communications equipment. Because of the widespread poverty and ignorance among the general populace, the overall quality of army manpower is low. Morale is generally good. By Latin American standards, individual and unit training range from good to poor. (C)

By actively working in civic action programs in such fields as building roads, constructing schools, and improving sanitation, the army has gained a favorable public image. (C)

1. Organization (C)

The Honduran Army is organized into an infantry brigade, nine separate battalions (seven infantry, one artillery, and one engineer), eight military zones, and a Logistic Support Center (Figure 1). For operational command, these units are responsible directly to the Chief of the Armed Forces, with staff supervision, in theory at least, under the Armed Forces General Staff; in fact, the staff is regularly bypassed in favor of direct resort to the Chief of the Armed Forces.

The eight military zones represent geographic areas of the country, all but two including more than one political department. The zones formerly had sizable troop elements, but these have now been absorbed into the separate battalions.

2. Strength, composition, and disposition (C)

Personnel strength, which more than doubled as a result of the Salvadoran invasion in 1969, is estimated at 10,000, including about 600 officers, 2,000 noncommissioned officers, and 7,400 privates.⁴ The infantry brigade, the separate infantry battalions, and the separate artillery battalion—totaling 9,860 men—are organized, trained, and equipped for combat. The remaining troops are assigned to the engineer battalion, the signal platoon or the Logistic Support Center.

The infantry brigade, with a strength of 3,600, is organized into four infantry battalions and one artillery battalion and has its headquarters at Las Tapias, just south of Tegucigalpa, in the Central Zone. Originally established as the Presidential Honor

⁴For current figures, see the *Military Intelligence Summary*, published semi-annually by the Defense Intelligence Agency.

Guard, it has become one of Honduras' crack units. The separate infantry battalions, with strengths ranging from 180 to 830, are disposed as follows:

BATTALION	STRENGTH	ZONE	HEADQUARTERS
1st	830	Central	Las Casitas
2d	830	Central	Tamara
3d	830	Zone II	San Pedro Sula
4th	180	Zone VII	La Ceiba
11th	830	Zone I	Choluteca
12th	830	Zone III	Santa Rosa de Copan
13th	830	Zone IV	Marcala

The 1st Battalion, the 2d Battalion, the 3d Battalion, and the Engineer Battalion are MAP-supported units. The 600-man separate artillery battalion is headquartered at Lepaterique, also in the Central Zone. The 400-man engineer battalion is the only combat support unit. Its headquarters are located in Siguatepeque, in the Central Zone, but, because of the nature of its assigned task, its personnel are often widely dispersed.

In Zones V and VI, where none of the battalions are stationed, there are company-size units at Juticalpa and Puerto Lempira, respectively, temporarily detached from separate infantry battalions, usually from units in the Central Zone.

The 50-man Logistic Support Center, in the Central Zone, provides the only centralized logistic support (including supply, transportation, and vehicle maintenance) to the military units.

The infantry brigade's artillery battalion is equipped with five 120-mm and five 81-mm Spanish mortars. The separate artillery battalion has four old U.S. 75-mm howitzers, five 105-mm Spanish howitzers, and five 120-mm (probably rifled French) mortars. The 2d and 13th Infantry Battalions have 60- and 81-mm mortars organic to them. Otherwise, all equipment is both scanty and heterogeneous.

3. Training (C)

There are no separate service schools for army personnel. Officers attend the military academy, discussed in the training subsection under Joint Activities.

Recruit training is conducted by the individual units and is not uniform. A general shortage of training facilities and qualified instructors further handicaps training. Considerable time is devoted to instruction in reading and writing, at a sacrifice in the amount of time spent on training on military and technical subjects. There are plans for a central recruit battalion, as soon as funds become available, which should result in considerable improvement.

U.S. Mobile Training Teams (MTT) from the Canal Zone have conducted various courses in

communications, maintenance, military police methods, intelligence, and counterinsurgency. An effort has been made to have personnel from all major commands attend these courses.

In addition to in-country training, officers frequently attend courses in the United States or at the School of the Americas, Fort Gulick, in the Canal Zone. Little training assistance is received from countries other than the United States, although some members of the army have attended military, medical, engineering, and communications courses in Guatemala, Mexico, most major South American countries, and Italy and Spain.

4. Logistics⁵

Although the Ministry of National Defense and Public Security has responsibility for procurement and supply, logistical activities for the army generally are conducted at the unit level. The ministry usually is involved only in obtaining U.S. materiel for the MAP-supported units; uniforms, shoes, and related items are furnished by the National Tailor Shop. Each unit provides for its own support, including most procurement, storage, maintenance (other than vehicular), routine transportation, and other required services. Most supplies, including foodstuffs and POL products, are procured locally through regularly budgeted funds. The Logistic Support Center provides most vehicle maintenance and major transportation for all units, but its primary responsibility is geared toward the MAP units. There are small reserves of supplies and ammunition. (C)

Prior to the July 1969 conflict with El Salvador, Honduran military units, with the exception of the MAP-supported units, had inadequate and heterogeneous weapons and ammunition stocks—the estimate was given that the Honduran Army had a 1-hour supply of ammunition. The armed struggle with El Salvador graphically emphasized this weakness to the Hondurans and has resulted in the purchase of arms and ammunition to standardize weapons, replenish exhausted ammunition stocks, and enhance the combat capabilities of the army. Purchases have included small arms and ammunition from Belgium, Spain, and Portugal, eight 105-mm howitzers from Spain, and about 80 mortars (60-, 81-, and 120-mm) from France, Spain, and Portugal. In addition, Honduras is attempting to produce an 81-mm Brandt mortar and claims to have three in service with the army. (S)

⁵For third-country acquisitions, see *Foreign Military Assistance*, published semi-annually by the Defense Intelligence Agency.

There are no ammunition production facilities in the country. Each battalion and military zone stores its own ammunition. The three MAP-supported battalions store their ammunition in small bunkers, and the remaining units utilize their arms rooms for ammunition storage. In all cases, the safety measures and physical security are poor. (C)

The army does not have the capability to support itself in sustained military operations; in an emergency, it would have to rely upon civilian vehicles to supplement its own transport capability. U.S. military assistance plans include a buildup of military vehicles to improve army mobility, and deliveries in 1971-72 included fourteen 2½-ton trucks, eight 5-ton dump trucks, and two 10-ton tractor trucks, at least doubling the inventories in those categories. (C)

Vehicles range in age from new to 10 years old. Their condition varies but generally is good. The military zones have practically no transport. Each unit commander normally has a private vehicle, however, which he uses for official duty. At least one other officer in each zone has a jeep, usually of Japanese manufacture, or a Japanese pickup truck, that is used both officially and privately. Undoubtedly the officers receive government aid in purchasing these vehicles and continue to receive assistance in maintaining them. (C)

In the event that trucks are needed for any purpose in the military zones, they are rented or commandeered (depending upon the urgency of the situation) from local civilians. (C)

D. Coast guard (C)⁶

In 1964 the United States, through MAP, supplied the Honduran Armed Forces with two Mark IV 40-foot U.S. Coast Guard utility boats. They were assigned to the 1st Boat Detachment, subordinate to the Commander of Military Zone II. In January 1968, the 1st Boat Detachment was converted, by decree, into the Coast Guard of the Armed Forces, with organizational status equal to that of the army and air force. Its personnel strength was 80 officers and men. In December of 1968, one of the utility boats was sunk, and by January 1972 the Armed Forces became convinced that it was uneconomical to operate a single boat and had the remaining one hauled out and placed on a flatcar. The boat is operational but it leaks. In 1972 the armed forces budgeted no funds for the coast guard, its personnel reverted to the army or

⁶For current information, see the *Military Intelligence Summary*, published semi-annually by the Defense Intelligence Agency.

left military service, and the coast guard presently is a paper force, with an Annapolis graduate as commander.

E. Air force

The 490-man Honduran Air Force is a small tactical force. It is one of the most efficient air forces in Central America, ranking second only to Guatemala in size and capability. Its superiority over that of El Salvador was demonstrated during the 1969 armed conflict with that country. (C)

The missions of the Honduran Air Force are national defense and internal security through reconnaissance, airlift, and close support to ground force elements, as well as provision of transportation for government officials and participation in civic action projects. (C)

In a ground support role, the air force is capable of providing brief, concentrated support to ground forces. Pilot capability is considered excellent, and pilot accuracy in bombing and strafing is effective, as demonstrated during the 1969 conflict with El Salvador. The tactical element has a satisfactory capability for furnishing close air support for ground operations, and the transports can fulfill requirements for airlift, supply, observation, leaflet drops, and airborne loudspeaker service. Patrols of the coastal areas are conducted whenever necessary. (S)

The air force has a modest capability for search and rescue operations and air evacuation, but its reconnaissance capability is limited to visual sightings. In addition, it has been trying to develop an aerial photographic capability, but the progress in this respect is unknown. (S)

The Honduran Air Force is anti-Communist and probably will remain loyal to any government except one it considers to be a threat to the capabilities of the service. (C)

I. Organization (C)

The Commander of the Air Force, who is directly responsible to the Chief of the Armed Forces, is assisted by a vice-commander and an Air Staff organized into sections for personnel, operations, training, maintenance, and internal security.

The air force headquarters are at Toncontin International Airfield (Tegucigalpa). Aircraft are assigned to a single composite squadron, which is organized into two sections—air transport and tactical. In addition, the air force has two internal security companies and a paratroop platoon.

2. Strength, composition, and disposition

The Honduran Air Force has a personnel strength of about 190, including approximately 50 officers (30 are pilots) and 140 airmen.⁷ In addition there are 140 civilian technicians. The air force has a paratroop platoon (one officer and 25 enlisted men) and two internal security companies. (C)

As of December 1972, the aircraft inventory⁸ included:

- 6 North American F-86K jet fighters
- 34 piston-engine aircraft
 - 1 Douglas B-26 bomber
 - 11 Chance-Vought F-4U Corsairs
- 10 transports:
 - 2 Douglas C-54's
 - 1 Beechcraft C-45
 - 7 Douglas C-47's
- 8 trainers:
 - 4 North American T-6's
 - 4 North American T-28A's
- 4 utility:
 - 2 Cessna 180's
 - 2 Cessna 185's

All the aircraft are based at Toncontin International Airfield. Until the 1969 conflict with El Salvador, the only armed aircraft were the Corsairs (five with 20-mm cannon and five with .50-caliber machineguns) and the T-6's (.30 caliber machineguns, rockets, and bombs). After the 1969 conflict, Honduras acquired the F-86K's, one B-26, one C-54, and one C-47. The B-26 and the C-47 have been armed with .50-caliber machineguns. The C-47 was a surplus U.S. aircraft received as grant aid, and the other aircraft were purchased from third countries. The F-86K's, probably obtained from Venezuela, arrived in early 1970 without various essential parts such as landing gear and instrument panels, and despite almost unremitting labor, are still inoperable. The B-26 bomber, purchased from Costa Rica, was severely damaged in a crash landing on 16 March 1971, but flew again on 21 July 1972. The C-54 is reserved for administrative flights and one C-47 is held for presidential use. Reportedly Honduras plans to purchase 6 A-37B's from the United States for delivery in the spring of 1975. (S)

3. Training (C)

Most officers of the air force are graduates of the General Francisco Morazan Military Academy. Once

⁷For current figures, see the *Military Intelligence Summary*, published semi-annually by the Defense Intelligence Agency.

⁸For current figures, see the *Military Intelligence Summary*, published semi-annually by the Defense Intelligence Agency.

commissioned, the officers receive comprehensive and well-organized air force training. The air force's Military Aviation School, at Toncontin International Airfield, offers basic flight and technical training and is capable of meeting annual pilot training requirements. The school operates on a flexible schedule and has courses ranging in length from 6 to 18 months. Operational training, performed in squadron and specialized courses, includes night tactical landings, paradrops, counterinsurgency operations, and psychological warfare.

Prior to the July 1969 conflict, advanced training was acquired through MAP in the United States, and advanced technical training at the Inter-American Air Forces Academy, in the Canal Zone. The Honduran Air Force Mechanics School provides a 1 year course for students. A 25-man air force paratroop platoon was established in 1969, and some of its personnel have received jump training outside of Honduras.

A few joint exercises have been held with the army, mostly in counterinsurgency operations.

4. Logistics (S)

The air force is dependent upon foreign countries for all equipment, weapons, and supplies. In the past, the United States has been the principal source of aircraft and supplies. Since 1969, however, dependence on the United States has lessened, and all aircraft and ammunition purchased have been from third countries.

The low stock levels of airborne ammunition were sharply evident when the air force quickly depleted its stocks of bombs and rockets during the July 1969 conflict. Bombs, rockets, and napalm received from Portugal and Belgium in 1969 and 1970 replenished these depleted stocks. POL supplies are adequate for normal peacetime needs but include no war reserves.

There is a simple internal supply system. Major aircraft parts and equipment are purchased as needed, and the stock level of frequently required spare parts is barely adequate. The Honduran Air Force is considered to have the best maintenance of any Central American air force. Maintenance, performed in the air force shops at the Toncontin airfield, has achieved a high in-commission rate for the air force.

The maintenance and supply system could not support the air force in prolonged operations. The principal logistic weaknesses are the complete dependence on outside sources for materiel and the low stock levels.