

Getting to Peace in El Salvador: The Roles of the United Nations Secretariat and ONUSAL*

Tommie Sue Montgomery

INTRODUCTION

DURING 1995, the 50th anniversary year of the United Nations (UN), news of the failure of its peacekeeping missions in Bosnia, Somalia, and Rwanda dominated the media and political rhetoric. In El Salvador, however, a UN mission with a legitimate claim to success was able to close its doors on 30 April 1995. How is this remarkable achievement to be explained? And, what are the lessons — positive and negative — that can be learned from the 45 months during which the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (*Misión de Observadores de las Naciones Unidas en El Salvador* or ONUSAL) oversaw a transition from war to peace and verified a lengthy set of peace accords?

The success of ONUSAL was anything but assured when it began in July 1991, some six months before there was even a cease-fire. By the late 1980s, El Salvador had been embroiled

Tommie Sue Montgomery is a Senior Research Associate at the North-South Center of the University of Miami. Most of the research for this paper was carried out under a North-South grant during eight months' residence in El Salvador in 1993-94. Prior research was done during six trips to the country in 1991-92; subsequent research, covered by North-South Center Senior Research Associate travel funds, included trips to El Salvador in October 1994 and April 1995, and to Washington, D.C. and the United Nations in November 1994. Most interviews with UN employees, under the organization's rules, were "off the record."

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in a seemingly intransigent civil war for more than a decade. The insurgency against the government, led by the *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* (FMLN), was rooted in the social, economic, and political conditions of the country. The peace accords that began with a human rights agreement, forged in July 1990 in San José (Costa Rica), sought to address effectively these issues that had long defied resolution. The Salvadoran government's demonstrable lack of political will to comply fully with the peace accords, especially in those areas that encompassed fundamental changes in the armed forces, public security, and economic policy, was a chronic stumbling block. Similarly, the failure of the FMLN to produce and destroy all its weapons nearly dismantled the peace process in May 1993, while internal political differences produced more delays.

Meanwhile, more than 1,000 ONUSAL police, military and civilian men and women from more than three dozen countries worked with a tenacity and dedication that carried the mission through its most difficult times. They monitored everything from human rights to the army, police, elections, public demonstrations, land, and judicial reform. It was, in short, a multi-disciplinary mission. In so doing, ONUSAL regularly exceeded the mandate laid down by the UN Security Council. To have done less would have meant certain failure in its fundamental mandate: i.e., to oversee and verify full implementation of the peace accords that had been hammered out during 20 months of UN-mediated negotiations in Geneva, Caracas, San José, Mexico, and New York.

THE ORIGINS OF UNITED NATIONS' INVOLVEMENT

IN March 1989, just two days after his election to the Salvadoran presidency, Alfredo Cristiani called for immediate peace talks with the FMLN. Shortly thereafter, in early May, a delegation from the FMLN met with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, to solicit greater UN

participation in seeking a negotiated solution to the civil war. Throughout the following month, informal contacts continued between the FMLN and UN officials. The first significant negotiations between the government of El Salvador and the FMLN took place in mid-September 1989, with the UN present as one of three observers (the others being the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Catholic Church). In a September meeting held in Mexico, the FMLN presented a proposal for establishing a cease-fire by the 15th of November and ending the war on 30 January 1990. A second meeting in October, convened in San José (Costa Rica), included discussions on the cessation of hostilities. At that time, the government demanded an immediate cease-fire and the unconditional surrender of the guerrillas, whom it believed to be militarily moribund. The FMLN, concluding that the government was not serious, launched its biggest military offensive in November 1989, bringing the war to the capital. The offensive made two things indisputably clear: the army's lack of competence and the FMLN's inability to spark a popular insurrection. However, it did bring both sides back to the negotiating table with a new resolution.

As the offensive wound down in mid-December 1989, the presidents of the Central American countries met in San Isidro de Coronado (Costa Rica), from which they issued a request that the UN Secretary-General use his good offices to reach peace in El Salvador. Meanwhile, during the offensive, the FMLN had met secretly with Alvaro de Soto, a special assistant to the Secretary-General, to explore the possibility of resuming negotiations. On 31 January 1990, President Cristiani met with Pérez de Cuéllar to make a formal request that the United Nations step in to mediate peace talks. As a result, the UN Secretary-General's office, at the behest of the government and the rebels, initiated several months of shuttle diplomacy in February and March. On 4 April 1990, both sides met in Geneva (Switzerland) and agreed to open formal negotiations, asking the United Nations to serve as mediator in the peace talks.

Initial Accords, July 1990 - May 1991

Following meetings in Geneva and Caracas, talks held in San José, throughout the month of July, produced the first substantive agreement: on human rights. The fact that the Salvadorans viewed human rights, rather than the traditional military peacekeeping activities, as the most pressing issue demonstrated that, from the outset, ONUSAL would be a ground-breaking mission. In the accords, all parties agreed that the human rights mission would begin when the cease-fire took effect. However, in the months following the San José meeting, a consensus began to emerge between the government and the FMLN that the monitoring of human rights abuses should begin immediately. Thus it was that, on 6 September 1990, the UN Security Council, upon receiving the Secretary-General's request, approved the opening of a preparatory office in San Salvador, the country's capital. In January 1991, the office opened with a staff of four officials. On 26 July, exactly one year after the San José accords and six months before the cease-fire would take effect, ONUSAL opened with a human rights division.

It is important to emphasize that the character of the UN Observer Mission was defined by these first accords. From the very beginning, it was understood by all sides that the mission would be multi-disciplinary in character and that human rights would have a preeminent focus. To a significant extent, however, ONUSAL's role would develop *in situ*, as it sought to respond creatively and positively to conditions and situations that had not been anticipated either during the peace talks or by the accords themselves.

After San José, the first of several impasses occurred in the negotiations. These stalemates increased the proactive role of the UN negotiating team and ultimately resulted in the UN writing most of the peace accords. Roberto Cañas, the FMLN spokesman during the negotiations, recalled that "Alvaro de Soto presided over the negotiating table while Pedro Nikken wrote almost all the accords" (Cañas, 1995; Nikken, 1994).

Even before San José, however, Nikken had carried a draft proposal to Geneva that addressed three issues: (1) a “special commission,” that would later become the “Truth Commission;” (2) human rights, and (3) the armed forces. When the FMLN refused to deal with the latter issue, the UN delivered a two-part document addressing the other two items. The result was the San José agreement. A deadlock over the issue of the armed forces led to a request by the government and FMLN that Alvaro de Soto prepare a secret working paper for their consideration. De Soto’s paper called for abolishing 2 of the 3 state security forces¹ and the military intelligence apparatus. It also proposed a 3-person commission empowered to investigate the individual records of senior military officers on human rights violations and recommend prosecution where necessary. This procedure led to a tacit agreement between both parties to work only with papers introduced by the United Nations.

This, however, did not stop the FMLN from presenting its own proposals to the UN. De Soto met separately with each side before every session and, on one occasion, even asked David Escobar Galindo, President Cristiani’s personal representative on the government team, to “show me something,” at which Escobar responded that “there were no instructions” from his government. As one UN official observed much later: “when one party assumes this posture in the negotiations, that one always loses and the other wins.” Nowhere was this made more clear than in the FMLN’s proposals regarding the future of the armed forces. In June 1990, the FMLN presented a draft that called for reducing, purifying, and dissolving the paramilitary forces; for ending forced recruitment; for ending impunity; and for punishing the perpetrators of the most egregious cases involving human rights, including those of the murders of Archbishop Romero (1980) and the Jesuits (1989). Negotiations on the future of the armed forces went nowhere for over a year despite the fact that Alvaro de Soto presented another proposal in January 1991. Then, in August 1991, the FMLN position hardened: they asked for complete abolition of the armed

forces. While this proposal received no support from any quarter, and FMLN commanders denied that it was merely a negotiating tactic, the effect was to produce final accords that included all of the FMLN's proposals of June 1990.

The Final Accords, 1991

Soon after the 12-member ONUSAL technical mission arrived in El Salvador in March 1991, a 3-week negotiating session in Mexico produced the first set of agreements on constitutional reforms relating to the judicial system, human rights, the armed forces, and the electoral process. Although these changes were passed by Salvador's legislative assembly before the May 1st deadline, the process consumed virtually all of President Cristiani's political capital in order to do so.² As a consequence, he had no remaining leverage with which to pressure the more conservative members of his government and party on other issues still pending, such as the terms for a cease-fire and a political role for the FMLN. The guerrillas took the position that they could not agree to a cease-fire unless they were guaranteed a political role; the government said the FMLN could not have a political role so long as it remained armed. The result of this standoff was four months of inaction and stalemate in the negotiating process.

By September 1991, it became apparent that the only way to resolve the impasse was to bring Cristiani into the negotiations, which had moved to the United Nations. Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar wrote the president asking him to come to New York on 16 September 1991, while De Soto wrote a similar letter to the FMLN. He then told the United States government that (a) it had insisted on getting the Secretary-General directly involved; (b) that this had happened; and that (c) now the US had to produce visas for the FMLN commanders. The State Department complied with the request. On 25 September 1991, the parties arrived at a major agreement in which the FMLN abandoned its longstanding insistence on becoming incorporated into the armed forces in exchange for

involvement in the new National Civilian Police (*Policía Nacional Civil* or PNC)³ and participation in the National Commission for the Consolidation of Peace (*Comisión Nacional para la Consolidación de la Paz*, COPAZ).

Talks resumed, in Mexico, and continued throughout October and November. On 14 November 1991, the FMLN announced that it would begin a unilateral truce at midnight on the 16th of November in honor of the six Jesuits who had been murdered, along with their housekeeper and her daughter, by a unit of El Salvador's armed forces during the 1989 offensive. The two sides pledged to maintain the truce until a bilateral cease-fire agreement was signed. The following week, President Cristiani announced that the air force would immediately end its aerial bombardments and use of heavy artillery. By mid-December 1991, with little progress in the talks, the UN insisted on returning to New York. Nevertheless, the negotiations continued, albeit at a snail's pace. With no authority to make decisions, the government team had to consult with Cristiani, by phone or fax, regarding every detail. Finally, with Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar's term of office expiring on 31 December, and his successor, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, making it clear to the UN team that he did not want to inherit a situation about which he knew nothing, the UN, the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General (Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela and Spain), and the United States pressured Cristiani to come to New York. He arrived on 28 December, whereupon the negotiations went into virtual round-the-clock sessions. When the issue of land distribution threatened to undermine the momentum that was building toward the final accords, Alvaro de Soto called Gert Rosenthal, an internationally respected specialist on agrarian reform, who interrupted his vacation in Santiago de Chile to come to New York. At one point, Rosenthal, Ana Guadalupe Martínez (of the FMLN) and Armando Calderón Sol,⁴ who had accompanied President Cristiani, found themselves around the table in de Soto's conference room hammering out the details on the land issue.⁵

On New Year's Eve, Pérez de Cuéllar, who was supposed to depart from New York at 10 AM, postponed his departure several times throughout the day as hopes grew for a successful conclusion. Minutes before 1992 arrived, agreement was finally reached on the key remaining issues. These included: (1) reducing the size of the armed forces; (2) limiting its role to territorial security; (3) revising the education of officers; (4) providing for purification of the officer corps; (5) eliminating the 3 security forces and replacing them with the PNC; (6) reforming the judiciary; and (7) providing for electoral reform. Although economic and social issues were also on the agenda, these were the least detailed of the issues under consideration; they would later cause the most problems.

A member of the UN negotiating team subsequently acknowledged that "we were trying to change a whole society," not simply bring an end to an 11-year-old civil war. The accords were only the first step. Both the agreements, as well as their implementation, could not have happened without the good will of the parties involved, together with the crucial role played by the United Nations.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MISSION

THE United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador represents a series of "firsts" for the United Nations: (1) it was the result of the first UN effort to resolve an internal war; (2) it was a "pilot mission," with the goal not just of disarmament and military demobilization, but of national reconciliation as well; and (3) it was the first UN mission to be established *prior* to a cease-fire arrangement. The ONUSAL structure would eventually evolve to include 4 divisions — human rights, police, military, and electoral — plus a political staff.⁶ In addition to the headquarters in San Salvador, 4 regional and 2 sub-regional offices were established around the country.⁷

At the same time, ONUSAL was not the only UN presence in the country. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has been in the country for 30 years. The United

Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been present since the 1980s, while the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) also has an office that antedates ONUSAL. Although all played an important part in the peace process, it was the UNDP that, after ONUSAL, was expected to have the most significant role in helping to implement certain aspects of the accords, the *Policía Nacional Civil* (PNC) in particular. As redistribution of land, resettlement of former combatants, reform of the judiciary, plus a broad range of other political issues came to consume the attention of ONUSAL, the latter soon discovered that other institutions, especially the UNDP, were either not willing or able to participate as expected. As a result, ONUSAL had to assume responsibility for the bulk of the monitoring of the political reform and verification of compliance. This was particularly true with regard to the PNC and the *Academia Nacional de Seguridad Pública* (ANSP), where an early assumption that the UNDP would oversee the creation of these institutions finally gave way, over several months in 1992, to an awareness that ONUSAL would have to assume responsibility for both observation and verification of this process.

Senior officials of both organizations discussed the reasons for these problems in interviews. First, the UNDP operates under a fundamentally different mandate than does a UN mission, such as ONUSAL. The formal relationship of the UNDP is with the government of the country in which it is located. It cannot, therefore, establish working relationships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or other national entities, such as the FMLN, which had, under the peace accords, a role in overseeing development of the PNC and ANSP. Second, because the UNDP is in a country for years, rather than under 6-month renewable mandates, its *modus operandi* is long-term, not short-term, and it is almost impossible for the agency to respond quickly to an essentially crisis situation. Third, in the case of El Salvador, the leadership of the UNDP was not favorably disposed, in 1992, to make exceptions to the above or to cooperate with ONUSAL. This last factor changed with the arrival of a new Resident Representative in July 1993 (UNDP, 1994 and 1995; ONUSAL, 1995, 1994b, and 1993).

In contrast to the UN agencies, ONUSAL, like all other missions of the UN, was given life by a Security Council resolution for a renewable period of 6 months. The mandate, as defined by the peace accords and ratified by the Security Council, was to observe and verify compliance with all the agreements reached by the government of El Salvador and the FMLN. On the ground, however, the reality of effecting a transition from war to peace meant that the mission exceeded its mandate from Day One.

Setting Up the Mission

ONUSAL developed in 4 distinct phases which encompassed the periods before, during, and after the cease-fire. The first phase was marked by the opening of the mission in July 1991 and ended 31 January 1992, one day before the cease-fire went into effect. During this period, 6 regional offices were set up, each with a coordinator, specialists on human rights, legal officers, and ONUSAL police forces. All worked together to achieve the goals of monitoring human rights and preparing for an effective cease-fire. In addition, in mid-September 1991, the UN-sponsored "Operation Palomino" began with ONUSAL/ONUCA⁸ helicopters shuttling FMLN field commanders out of their strongholds into Mexico, *via* Tegucigalpa (Honduras), for the peace talks.

Anywhere from 4-8 human rights officers were assigned to each regional office, and 150 observers were spread throughout the country to deal with reported violations. In September 1991, an ONUSAL political officer declared that, "We're not here to denounce. We're here to develop and provide positive alternatives" (ONUSAL, 1991). Despite the absence of uniform criteria, a set of common objectives emerged during the initial weeks. First, it was necessary to pay courtesy calls on relevant sectors of Salvadoran society, especially officials of both local and national government, the military, the NGOs, and the FMLN. ONUSAL officials visited every military barracks in the country and established regular contact with their commanders. Human rights officers received

complaints in their offices and followed up with the appropriate authorities of either the government or the FMLN. Information campaigns, including both radio interviews and visits to communities, were carried out to explain the role of ONUSAL to the population at large. Finally, a program of human rights education was initiated among the armed forces, the security forces, the FMLN and, ultimately, influential sectors of the civilian population, including teachers.

During this period, some organizational difficulties began to emerge because there was a Chief of Mission who was also the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Pakistani Iqbal Riza, in addition to a head of the Human Rights Division, Philippe Texier of France. In the regional offices, however, there was only one boss: the coordinator. Texier, whom a Chilean human rights officer described as “a man with a human rights soul,” was also characterized (by a senior ONUSAL official) as “vacillating,” “timid,” and unable to “work as part of a team.” This same official also observed that Iqbal Riza “left [Texier] like an abandoned ship,” while Texier “didn’t give help but also didn’t ask for help” (ONUSAL, 1994b and 1994c). Structural problems contributed to the operational difficulties. A political officer noted that “Riza was respectful of the autonomy of the Human Rights Division because he was not familiar with human rights and therefore deferred to Texier” (ONUSAL, 1994a). Riza focused on political issues and the networking among Salvadorans that was essential to the mission’s success. These circumstances produced two sets of problems. One was that the regional coordinators reported to Riza, not Texier, and there were some coordinators who ignored Texier’s directives in favor of waiting for word from the chief of mission. The other problem was that Texier failed either to establish a uniform set of criteria for processing (or following up on) complaints or to develop standardized forms for use by officials in the regional offices. In the latter case, the result was that each regional office developed its own criteria and forms, which, in turn, contributed to difficulties in writing the human rights reports back at headquarters.

Two days before the peace accords were signed (16 January) at Chapultepec Castle in Mexico City, the UN Security Council approved (in Resolution 729) the expansion of ONUSAL's mission to include a second and third division: the police and the military. Within days, the chief of ONUCA, Spanish General Víctor Suanzes Pardo, closed down that mission and — with 119 military officers (who moved from Honduras to El Salvador) plus 16 military officers who had been in country since ONUSAL's inception — began to organize the military division. During the last two weeks of January, while Suanzes set up a joint working group composed of senior army officers, FMLN commanders and himself, which began to meet regularly in ONUSAL headquarters, several hundred police observers began to arrive and were posted to the regional offices. An ONUSAL-UNDP working group was formed when the military observers, mandated to supervise concentrations of guerrillas in defined zones, realized that there was a pressing need for water, food, and sanitary facilities in those same areas.

From a Militarized to a Demilitarized Society

The second phase of ONUSAL's involvement — which began with the formal cease-fire (1 February 1992) and ended 15 December 1992 — focussed on 5 main objectives: *first*, demobilizing and disarming the FMLN in 5 stages; *second*, reducing the armed forces by half and dismantling the “rapid reaction battalions” and security forces; *third*, preparing for the new PNC; *fourth*, reestablishing public administration in former conflict zones; and *fifth*, removing mines.

Within days of the cease-fire, over 300 police observers from 8 countries arrived. Many of them and their military colleagues (the Spaniards being the notable exceptions) arrived without having read, or even hearing a lecture on, the peace accords and ONUSAL's mandate, or the situation in El Salvador. Many did not see a copy of the accords until they arrived at their regional offices. The Italian contingent arrived without being able to speak a word of Spanish (a failing which

the Italian government took pains to address with subsequent contingents, all of whom received intensive language training before departure). Many members of the Mexican contingent had been arbitrarily promoted to officers so that they could be sent to El Salvador, a situation that provoked contempt and derision among the well-trained and well-educated officers from both Europe and South America. Budding difficulties with the police division were exacerbated by difficulties in selecting a division chief, and a month passed before the Uruguyan Police General Homero Vaz Bresque was plucked out of the Western Sahara and sent to El Salvador.

The ONUSAL police observers began their monitoring operations on 7 February 1992, in all provinces. In mid-March, the Assistant Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Marrack Gouling, visited El Salvador to look into the implementation of the cease-fire. His other task was to try to resolve the problem of land seizures by supporters of the FMLN, which were then being carried out in defiance of earlier agreements, thus threatening to undermine the peace process. In April and May 1992, the disarming and disbanding of the government's Civil Defense Units began as part of the plan to reduce the armed forces. The original calendar for implementation of the accords had to be reworked on 17 June due to (a) continuing delays in the demobilization of the FMLN and, thus, its reinsertion into society, and (b) the government's failure to facilitate this process *via* legislation, particularly in regard to land, the formation of the PNC, and legalization of the FMLN as a political party. A second calendar revision then took place on 19 August, as a result of further noncompliance. Also in August, the first technical mission from the electoral division of the UN arrived; its conclusion, that the major problem lay with voter registration, would haunt ONUSAL and the entire electoral process into 1994.

In October, the Ad Hoc Commission Report, which reviewed the performance of the senior 10% of the armed forces (and which recommended that more than 100 officers be dismissed within 60 days), was given to President Cristiani and Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali.⁹ In late October, Marrack

Goulding and Alvaro de Soto visited El Salvador to pursue discussions on implementing these recommendations of the Ad Hoc Commission. By 25 November 1992, the cease-fire had successfully progressed to the point where the UN Military Division could reduce its observers from 375 to 226. On 15 December, the Secretary-General attended a ceremony to commemorate the end of the successful cease-fire period. Two days later, the FMLN finished demobilizing its troops.

Political Reforms

Two major issues came to characterize the third phase: *first*, the need to pay greater attention to the political aspects of the accords, and *second*, creation of the Electoral Division. This phase began with the end of the cease-fire and lasted through the elections of March 1994. By the fourth, and final, stage of the mission, political concerns would become virtually the entire focus.

Political Issues. The first major issues revolved around pushing compliance with troop reinsertion, transferring land, and creating the civilian police force (PNC). Throughout 1993, the reinsertion of former combatants back into civilian society and the transfer of land to them continued, though both were fraught with difficulty. In mid-November, Murrack Goulding made an 8-day visit to the country with two purposes in mind: to investigate the armed paramilitary groups and to secure agreement on a timetable for implementing the pending accords, preferably before the election campaign was scheduled to begin. This phase also witnessed the growing involvement of ONUSAL with the PNC and the ANSP. It is important to note that ONUSAL finally took the lead in establishing the PNC because the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) failed to fulfill the responsibility it had assumed for overseeing creation of that civil force.

ONUSAL also stepped in to break a stalemate in the Economic and Social Forum, another institution set up under the peace accords to promote agreement on basic economic

and labor issues among the three historic, and adversarial, forces: the government, the private sector, and the labor unions. After long delays, the Forum secured a set of agreements in early 1993, only to become deadlocked over adoption of several International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions. During the summer, ONUSAL Chief of Mission Augusto Ramírez Ocampo proposed that ILO specialists be invited to come in as mediators; their work broke the logjam.

The Electoral Division. The second focus of this third phase was creating the Electoral Division. This task developed separately from, yet occurred simultaneously with, the larger economic and political issues discussed above. Even though a preparatory office opened in June 1993, the division's day-to-day director, Rafael López Pintor,¹⁰ did not arrive until September, nor did the division's staff until October. Given the mammoth problems subsequently encountered with registration of voters,¹¹ this was very late indeed. These problems with registration had been pointed out earlier by a UN technical mission visiting the country the previous year, in August 1992. By the Spring of 1993, a UN-sponsored poll concluded that 786,000 adults were not registered to vote.

The peace accords mandated the creation of a Supreme Electoral Tribunal (*Tribunal Supremo Electoral* or TSE), as a means of depoliticizing the agency responsible for all aspects of running elections. In fact, not only was the TSE more politicized than ever, but, worse, it was completely incompetent. In a country with 60% illiteracy, it devised a complex, byzantine voter registration process that would have cowed even a well-educated voter. The whole process required massive logistical support, including registration forms, photocopying machines, Polaroid machines for taking photographs and making laminated voter registration cards, as well as vehicles for transporting registrars to and from remote municipalities. Nevertheless, the TSE failed to produce enough forms or secure enough equipment to implement its own plan.

The Electoral Division was created with a mandate to verify and observe the process before, during, and after the

elections scheduled for 20 March 1994. Under this mandate, the officers in each region were required to be present during the registration of voters and to observe the campaign, the voting procedure, and all ballot counting that followed. However, confronted by the inaction of the TSE, ONUSAL took on the responsibility for several major tasks by providing most of the logistical support for voter registration. It urged, bullied, and cajoled the TSE to do its job. Not least, it traveled to municipalities in order to locate the birth certificates individuals needed to qualify for registration, a task that originally came under the aegis of the TSE and mayoral offices.

The election campaign for the office of the presidency was formally opened on 20 November 1993, that for the Legislative Assembly on 20 January 1994, with the campaigns for municipal office beginning the following month. Chief of Mission Ramírez Ocampo negotiated a "gentlemen's agreement" among the presidential candidates of all major political parties regarding the conduct of the election and the campaign and their support for the peace process. On 5 November 1993, all the candidates, with the exception of the Christian Democratic candidate, signed the agreement in a ceremony at ONUSAL headquarters. During this period, ONUSAL electoral officers met periodically with the TSE in an effort to deal with problems as they arose. A system for receiving, and transmitting, instances of election violations to the TSE was established.

ONUSAL electoral officers visited each municipality (analogous to a county seat) in El Salvador, some 9 times each, to observe the conditions in the various regions. In all, the officers attended more than 800 political meetings and demonstrations and monitored political propaganda in the media. They developed codes of conduct for the political parties at the regional level. During this time, they also received complaints of death threats, assaults, and murders related to the campaign. Because the electoral division had no mandate to investigate such complaints, however, all were referred to the human rights division. On 10 March 1994, in a gathering at the ONUSAL headquarters presided over by Ramírez Ocampo, all the

candidates for president signed a declaration in which they denounced violence and promised to respect the results of the elections and fulfill the peace accords.

During the elections of 20 March 1994, 900 UN observers were sent to voting stations across the country in teams of 2-30 members. Their task was to accompany the voting materials throughout the entire election day: from the moment they were dispensed in San Salvador, to the tabulation of votes, and the final transport of the official totals and ballot boxes back to the capital. At close of the election day, Ramírez Ocampo declared that the elections, in general terms, had been carried out under adequate conditions of liberty, competitiveness, and security. ONUSAL's own "quick count," and its transmission to the political parties, prevented President Cristiani from declaring a premature, and erroneous, first-round victory for his party: the *Alianza Republicana Nacionalista* (ARENA). Although deficiencies of organization and transparency were noted, ONUSAL deemed the elections and their results acceptable. Even though the conservative ARENA won a plurality in the General Assembly plus a majority of the mayoral positions, none of the candidates gained a clear majority for the presidency. The lower-than-projected voter turnout was attributed to structural problems of the system, including the cumbersome voter registration process and the limited number of voting sites in the major cities.

On 24 April 1994, a second round of voting took place between the two candidates who had received the most votes in the election the preceding month: Armando Calderón Sol, of ARENA, and Rubén Zamora of the coalition made up of the FMLN, the *Convergencia Democrática* (CD), and the *Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario* (MNR). For this run-off election, ONUSAL dispatched the same number of observers. Calderón Sol was soon pronounced the victor. Despite the fact that the observers reported improved voting conditions during the second round of voting, irregularities persisted, such as voting *mesas* that failed to open on time and then closed early and citizens who were denied the right to vote due to faulty

documentation. The incompetence of the TSE, coupled with the irregularities reported in the March election and, though to a lesser extent, in that of April, could have delegitimized the elections. Thus, despite its difficulties, ONUSAL's Electoral Division saved the election process from certain disaster.

Institution Building

During the final phase of the ONUSAL mission, its entire focus was shifted to the task of ensuring compliance with the remaining socio-economic accords, the PNC, and the judicial system. The issues involved included land distribution; verifying, monitoring and working with the PNC; and institution-building, in close association with the offices of the national ombudsman for human rights (*Procuraduría General de los Derechos Humanos* or PDH). Despite significant advances that had taken place in the relationship between ONUSAL and UNDP, some problems still remained. In the last 6 months of ONUSAL's tenure, the mission had to develop all the institution-building projects, such as providing training courses to reinforce the judicial system, and did so in six weeks despite the UNDP having claimed it would take them a year to accomplish the same thing.

The Land Program. From the outset, the issue of land transfers threatened to be the most frustrating from the standpoint of compliance. In his report, issued near the close of the mission (24 March 1995), UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali conceded that the land program was a persistent source of great concern. At that time, more than half of the potential recipients had not yet been granted title to their land. Given the approach of the planting season (in May), the fact that the new farmers were encountering difficulties in gaining access to agricultural credits posed a troublesome situation. Boutros-Ghali asked that a special effort be made to overcome stumbling blocks in the program and ensure that credit be extended to all those who were entitled to it (UN Secretary-General, 1995: 10-12).

The PNC. By the end of the mission, the *Policía Nacional Civilista* (PNC) was still a fragile institution, particularly in need of strengthening its internal disciplinary operations and investigative capacity. The delay in effecting a transition to a civilian force was due to a number of factors: (1) the government's failure to provide the resources needed to prepare for the transition; (2) the failure to transfer both equipment and premises of the former security forces to the new one, plus a reluctance to dismantle the old forces; (3) lack of cooperation and attempts to exert control over the new police force by the extreme Right; and, (4) the massive insertion of former anti-narcotics and criminal investigation units into the PNC without the requisite screening or training.¹² During the final year of ONUSAL monitoring, officials continued to verify the demobilization of the *Policía Nacional* (PN) as well as the training, deployment and functioning of the nascent PNC. Early in 1995, and despite the PNC's commendable achievement in assuming responsibility for virtually all public security operations, the full establishment of the new civilian force as the sole policing institution was still incomplete.

Making Democracy Work. In order to ensure that human rights are secure and democracy can function unhindered, it is essential that the state be consolidated under the rule of law. Achieving this state of affairs rests upon the establishment of state institutions, and other structures, that are capable of guaranteeing full compliance with the peace agreements. Throughout the final year of the mission, ONUSAL was deeply involved in institution-building. This included restructuring and purifying the administration of justice; reforming the legislature; deploying the Office of the National Ombudsman for Human Rights throughout the country; revising and reshaping the penitentiary system; creating the PNC; encouraging non-governmental organizations; and reorganizing the armed forces.

Nonetheless, by the close of the mission, challenges abounded to the institution-building processes (mandated by the agreements) that were then being implemented. Efforts

were made to discredit the new state institutions, especially the PNC and the PDH.¹³ There was manipulation of socio-economic demands and a dramatic increase in common crime. There were also sporadic, yet constant, calls for an increased role for the military, which would have violated the peace accords and served to undermine the PNC, the fledgling political system, and other institutions then being strengthened or created consonant with the accords. Boutros-Ghali cited opposition from powerful pressure groups, as well as fragility of the new or reformed institutions, as contributing factors to the government's frequent indecisiveness on crucial issues. As the mission ended, the UN called for El Salvador's executive branch to assume responsibility for ensuring final compliance, particularly in the areas of land transfers, election reform, and accession to international human rights instruments (UN Secretary-General, 1995: 15-18).

ASSESSMENT

DESPITE the many problems of ONUSAL (personnel, administrative and logistical), it is important to celebrate its very real successes. *First*, during the 10-and-a-half months of 1992 that it took to disarm and demobilize the guerrillas and to reduce the Salvadoran army by half, the cease-fire was never violated. *Second*, the FMLN's entry into the political life of the country was without serious incident until, late in 1993, three senior officials of the FMLN were murdered within a month. However, even those tragedies, grievous as they were, failed to derail the process of incorporation, a situation that would have been inconceivable even 5 years earlier.

Third, Salvadorans began to develop an increasing respect for, and consciousness about, human rights. While some violations of human rights still occur, these numbered but a small fraction of those that had occurred during the 1980s. Such violations are no longer government policy, and the Salvadoran political culture no longer finds it acceptable to kill people for political reasons. Further, it is remarkable that, when the Counsel

General for Human Rights, Victoria Velásquez, came under attack in April 1995 for her independence, leading political figures, including a supreme court justice, rushed to her defense. This too would have been unheard of a few years earlier.

Fourth, pressure from the UN contributed to significant reform of the judicial process, something that a multimillion dollar assistance program of the United States, specifically targeted for that purpose, failed to achieve during the 1980s. While much remains to be done in this area, the rule of law and a competent, honest judiciary are beginning to take hold. *Fifth*, El Salvador acquired an all-new National Civilian Police. Despite delays occasioned by government foot-dragging, there are now 8,000 newly trained officers throughout the country. Not only did ONUSAL play a central role in overseeing the selection of candidates for the PNC leadership, but it also was instrumental in preparing a human rights component for the ANSP curriculum. In so doing, it helped introduce and, hopefully, inculcate modern concepts of “public security,” wherein the police function as public servants rather than as agents of a repressive state. The mission’s efforts to deter the attempts of the government to incorporate former members of the security force into special units of the PNC without their undergoing the requisite screening or training process — a violation of the accords — was less successful. Nonetheless, the newly established standards began to permeate Salvadoran society and have led to public demands that they be upheld.

In the area of electoral reform, a great deal remained to be done. Even though El Salvador’s Legislative Assembly addressed this task in the Spring and Summer of 1995, it remained unresolved. However, a new law was passed mandating establishment of a single identity card that would also serve as a voter registration card, even though the government has argued that it doesn’t have the resources to implement the law before the 1997 elections. Meanwhile, the US Agency for International Development (US-AID) and other international donors have been exploring the feasibility of financing an overhaul of the TSE.

ONUSAL finally closed its doors on 30 April 1995. However, in recognition, on all sides, that much unfinished business remained, it was succeeded by a new mission: the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (MINUSAL). Staffed by 18 specialists in areas where compliance with the peace accords was still pending, MINUSAL assumed its responsibilities under the direction of the last ONUSAL chief of mission, Venezuelan Enrique ter Horst, who also continued in his role as the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative. Meanwhile, a number of tasks were turned over to the UNDP, reflecting the marked improvement in the working relationship between temporary and permanent missions.

LESSONS LEARNED

THE role of the UN Secretariat in the Salvadoran peace talks, as well as ONUSAL's rich and complex experience in El Salvador, cannot be precisely replicated in any other mission. There are several reasons for this. First, the internal and international conditions that gave impetus to the negotiations, and to the mission, cannot be duplicated. Second, the convergence of interests among all the major actors, which combined to push the peace process along despite serious problems and setbacks, is distinctive. Third, each country's political culture is different. Fourth, the pressure-cooker situation in which the final accords were achieved, and the ambiguities this produced, gave rise to and shaped the responsibilities that ONUSAL was forced to assume beyond its defined mandate. Nevertheless, ONUSAL's varied responsibilities offer many lessons for present and future missions that call for blue berets and baseball caps, rather than blue helmets. Indeed, some of these lessons have already been incorporated into the new mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA).

A number of elements made for ONUSAL's success and contain implicit, positive lessons for present and future missions. The most important elements include the following:

First, a willingness on the part of both warring factions to use the United Nations as a mediator, both before and after the peace accords were signed.

Second, the quality and tenacity of the UN negotiating team, which contributed significantly to a successful conclusion of the negotiations, and whose two lead negotiators, Marrack Goulding and Alvaro de Soto, intervened at critical points after the cease-fire to keep the process on track.

Third, with rare exceptions, a first-rate ONUSAL staff in El Salvador, including three chiefs of mission who, in the judgment of almost everyone, were the right persons for the stage of the process that each oversaw.¹⁴

Fourth, a recognition by the Salvadoran government and the FMLN that human rights verification, rather than traditional peacekeeping (with civilian, rather than military, observers), was the appropriate first step in the peace process.

Fifth, support from most Salvadorans, across the political spectrum, for the accords and for ONUSAL's presence in their country.

Lessons learned that may carry relevance for future missions can be grouped under the general headings of (a) negotiating process, (b) inter-institutional relations, and (c) mission operations.¹⁵

The Negotiating Process

The fact that the mission to El Salvador represented the first time that the United Nations became involved in the resolution of a civil war meant that there were many lessons that were learned only by hindsight, or in the process of carrying out the mission's mandate. Two of the most important of these could not have been anticipated, given the lack of experience in such an endeavor. The first relates to the negotiating process:

1. *When it becomes clear that socio-economic issues are going to be part of the peace accords, it is imperative that a way be found to bring into the process the international agencies and organizations that will have responsibility for funding reconstruction programs and reforming or creating new institutions. This is particularly true for the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and, in the Western Hemisphere, the Inter-American Development Bank.*¹⁶

In the Salvadoran negotiations, agreements were struck for reforms and new institutions that assumed millions of dollars in international financing, as well as some modifications of the neoliberal economic model. Thus, there was a built-in contradiction between what the accords committed the government to do, on one hand, and the Cristiani administration's economic policy to that point, on the other. At the same time, there was an assumption that the Salvadoran government would absorb the costs of new institutions, such as the PNC. The government, however, balked at these expenditures, which meant that the United Nations had to scramble to find outside donors. The result was delays (of months in many cases) while funding and donations were arranged. This suggests that:

2. *Who will pay and where the funds will come from must be addressed in the negotiations.*

The third lesson concerns the relationship between a mission that opens before a cease-fire (as in the cases of El Salvador and Guatemala) and the negotiating process:

3. *When a mission is established while negotiations are continuing, the chief of mission must be kept abreast of developments; there must be periodic update seminars for the entire mission, and an in-depth seminar to inform the mission of the final accords is essential.*

In El Salvador the chief of mission, Iqbal Riza, was "outside the loop" of the negotiating process because he was 2,000 miles away. This is *not* to say that Riza was unaware of the general outlines of the peace accords as they were reached, or that he was not quickly informed of their content. Neither

he nor his staff, however, were cognizant of the implications that key economic and social issues, having been delayed until the end, were covered only in the barest detail. Thus, they were not able to anticipate the difficulties that would, and did, arise in the process of implementation during 1992 and later. The lesson from this experience is that:

4. There is a direct, positive relationship between the vagueness or ambiguity of peace agreements and the difficulty of implementing them after the cease-fire. If the parties do not attend to details, those charged with observing and verifying implementation had better be prepared to do so.

A specific convergence of events made possible the positive contribution of the Group of Friends, and it has been difficult to replicate this experience in Guatemala. Nonetheless, it is useful to try and identify sympathetic, supportive external actors who can help keep a peace process on track. This suggests that, both during negotiations and throughout the implementation period,

5. The United Nations must encourage, where appropriate, the "good offices" of outside actors who have an interest in the successful completion of the peace process.

Inter-Institutional Relations

The difficulties between ONUSAL and the UNDP that persisted throughout the history of the mission — despite the good will and best intentions of officials in both organizations — points to an underlying tension in, and challenge to, the present organizational structure of the United Nations:

6. Complementary organizations must work together efficiently and maintain constant contact in order to prevent the bulk of the work from falling excessively on one agency.

How to do this with differing mandates is the principal challenge.

Running the Mission

The lessons in this section speak to the day-to-day operations of ONUSAL. It is likely that some lessons have been learned in other UN missions because, in some measure, they reflect problems indigenous to the UN system. This, in turn, speaks to a larger problem that many UN and ONUSAL officials have acknowledged: there is no institutional learning curve in the United Nations, no way for these lessons to be absorbed, disseminated, and incorporated into future missions. As a result, missions have a tendency to repeat many of the mistakes of their predecessors. The United Nations, as an organization, must find a way to address this problem because reinventing the wheel costs time, money and productivity and, too often, produces unnecessary frustration among officials who are working 10-16 hour days. The first lesson is universal:

7. Every mission needs a good, clear organization, a chief of mission who lays out the ground rules, division chiefs who provide leadership, regional chiefs who make clear who is in charge, and coordination among all three levels.

If a mission has only one division at the beginning, as ONUSAL did and MINUGUA¹⁷ does,

8. The chief of mission should also be the division head. Absent this, the chief of mission must make clear the chain of command and not allow regional officers to circumvent it.

In order to achieve this,

9. There must be a clear, carefully spelled out mandate that is articulated by the division chief and the chief of mission and that is reflected in policy implementation at the regional level. This, in turn, implies a reciprocal relationship of open communications and respect between headquarters and regional offices.

Logistically, this relationship can be helped, at the regional level, by

10. Physical proximity of mission members. If possible, all members of a regional office should be in the same building.

The fact that, in several of the regional offices, the police division was located blocks or (in San Salvador) miles from the regional headquarters was not conducive either to inter-division relations or to enhancing the authority of the regional coordinator.

The fact that social, political and economic issues would require a great deal of effort and planning was unforeseen by the United Nations. That ONUSAL could not predict this development was understandable given that the multi-disciplinary model was new to the United Nations and to international peacekeeping in general. Furthermore, the mission represented the first attempt to end a civil war while establishing, simultaneously, nation-building institutional reforms. As a consequence of the many "firsts," the mission was slow to address the pressing political issues that confronted Salvadoran society. Although ONUSAL cannot be blamed for its lack of foresight, future missions will be open to criticism if they fail to heed the lessons so painfully gleaned from the ONUSAL experience, including:

11. *The need for sufficient planning with regard to political reform. Furthermore, in countries where social and political institutions are fragile to nonexistent, it is essential that a mission become involved as early as possible in institution-building.*

This, in turn, requires:

12. *An appropriate number of political officers whose skills match the issues defined by the peace accords and by an understanding of the country's history and political culture.*

This is necessary for two main reasons. The first is that the political aspects of a transition from war to peace, a militarized to a demilitarized society, and the potential need for continuing negotiations and/or mediation among previously warring factions should not be underestimated. Second, ONUSAL's priorities during the cease-fire period were disarmament, demobilization, and reduction of forces. The socio-political issues, in contrast, were long-term, had less visibility, received less attention, and were therefore harder to resolve.

From the day a mission opens its doors, it must engage in public relations, which includes education about itself and its mandate. In 1991-1992, mission officials and an outstanding public information staff made a concerted effort to disseminate information about ONUSAL as broadly as possible. These efforts included media interviews, public information spots, lectures, seminars and printed materials. In 1993, however, this sustained effort began to wane so that, toward the end of the mission, there were still educated, professional members of Salvadoran society who did not understand that ONUSAL was in their country at the invitation of their government.¹⁸ Therefore,

13. *A mission must recognize that public education concerning its role and presence in the country is a necessary priority and must sustain this effort throughout the lifetime of the mission.*

Finally, ONUSAL provides three lessons that relate to mission personnel and apply to any mission in any venue:

14. *Language is essential. No UN official should be sent to a country without a working knowledge of its principal language. The United Nations must insist that member states either use language as a criterion for selection of contingent members or provide intensive language training prior to departure.*

15. *Orientation about the nature and mandate of the mission is equally essential. Ideally, this should be done both in the home country before departure and in mission headquarters on arrival.*

16. *Given that the United Nations is dependent on member states to select the members of their respective contingents, the United Nations must find a way to insure a minimal level of quality control in the contingents.*

In the final analysis, the Salvadoran peace process advanced as far as it did in the first 4 years because the Salvadorans themselves wanted it to succeed. This process and ONUSAL's success, then, remind us all that international peacekeepers can carry out their mission only if supported by the parties to the conflict themselves. This is the most important lesson of all.

ACRONYMS

ANSP	Academia Nacional de Seguridad Pública
ARENA	Alianza Republicana Nacionalista
CD	Convergencia Democrática
COPAZ	Comisión Nacional para la Consolidación de la Paz
FMLN.....	Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional
ILO	International Labor Organization
MINUGUA ..	Misión de las Naciones Unidas para Guatemala
MINUSAL	Misión de las Naciones Unidas para El Salvador
MNR	Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario
ONUC	Operation des Nations Unie au Congo
ONUCA	Misión de Observadores de las Naciones Unidas en Centroamérica
ONUSAL.....	Misión de Observadores de las Naciones Unidas en El Salvador
PDH	Procuraduría General de los Derechos Humanos
PN	Policía Nacional
PNC	Policía Nacional Civil
TSE	Tribunal Supremo Electoral
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFICYP	United Nations Forces in Cyprus
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

NOTES

1. El Salvador had three "security forces" (the National Guard, Treasury Police and National Police), all of which were under the Ministry of Defense. All were notorious for their widely-documented abuses of human rights, though the National Police, a largely urban force, was less so.

2. The Salvadoran Constitution requires that all amendments be approved by two successive Assemblies. Since a new Assembly would take office on 1 May 1991, it was imperative that the changes be approved by the sitting deputies prior to that date so that the second approval could be rendered by the new assembly. Otherwise, the constitutional changes could not have taken effect, at the earliest, until after the 1997 elections, which would have violated the accords.

3. The accords provided for the participation of former members of the PN and FMLN, but all candidates for the new National Public Security Academy (ANSP) had to meet minimum educational requirements and pass a series of aptitude and psychological tests. A complementary accord, negotiated under ONUSAL auspices and signed (12 June 1992) by the government and the FMLN, established that the first classes to enter the Academy would be composed of 20% former guerrillas, 20% former National Police (PN), and 60% by civilians. The accord also specifically excluded former members of the other security forces and the army. Problems arose later when the government sought to admit former members of the security forces on the ground that, having left the service, they were now civilians. There were also efforts to incorporate former officers of the PN, as well as members of the special units (such as anti-drug), without their being screened or attending the ANSP. These efforts were vigorously opposed, if not entirely successfully, by both ONUSAL and the FMLN.

4. Calderón Sol was mayor of San Salvador at the time; he is now president of El Salvador.

5. The negotiators had to deal with two land issues. One was what to do with lands in former zones of conflict that had been abandoned by their owners at the beginning of the war and farmed for a decade or more by other inhabitants. The other was how to arrange for former guerrillas and soldiers who wanted to farm to receive plots. Related issues, such as technical assistance and credits, were not addressed in the accords and created problems later on.

6. This is not to say that UN missions established in intra-state conflicts did not bear some multi-disciplinary components; however, where institution-building efforts occurred prior to the late 1980s,

they developed on an *ad hoc* basis and were vastly smaller in number compared with the traditional peacekeeping missions by the military. Typically, alterations were made to a mission already in place in order to achieve more than temporary stability through military forces. The activities were usually limited to technical aid or humanitarian relief, avoiding at all times ideological disputes. The two most prominent examples were the UN Operation in the Congo (ONUC) in 1960-64 and the UN Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), which has been operating from 1964-present.

7. The regional offices were in San Salvador (separate from headquarters), Santa Ana in the west, San Miguel in the east, and San Vicente (central); sub-regional offices were set up in Chalatenango (north, tied to San Salvador) and Usulután (southeast, San Miguel). Eventually, both sub-regional offices became regional offices with their own coordinators.

8. ONUCA — the United Nations Observer Mission in Central America — was deployed to the region in 1990-1991 in response to the Central American peace accords that had been signed by the region's presidents in Esquipulas (Guatemala) in August 1987. While ONUCA military officers were located in each of the Central American countries (with the exception of Belize and Panama), the real purpose of the mission was to demobilize and disarm the Nicaraguan *contras* in Honduras and help effect their repatriation to Nicaragua. The mission closed in January 1992, whereupon the remaining ONUCA officers transferred immediately into ONUSAL.

9. The Ad Hoc Commission was composed of three Salvadorans "of recognized independence of judgment and unimpeachable democratic credentials," chosen by the Secretary-General in a "process of consultations" (UN, 1992: 50). Although ONUSAL had nothing to do with the Ad Hoc Commission during its work, it was drawn into pressuring the government and armed forces to comply with its findings, as stipulated in the peace accords.

10. The formal head of the division was Vice Chief of Mission Michael Gucovsky; however, López Pintor had responsibility for day-to-day operations and became *de facto* head of the division when Gucovsky left the mission in January 1994.

11. The problems with registration, the role of ONUSAL, and the entire electoral process are discussed at length by Montgomery (1995: 246-259 and 263-267). In addition to numerous interviews with ONUSAL electoral officials and regional coordinators across the country, I also served as an official electoral observer with a US delegation for the March election and also, a month later, on behalf of the UN for the one in April.

12. During the latter half of 1995, substantial evidence emerged that members of the PNC and its Department of Criminal Investigations, in particular, were hiring themselves out as hitmen and were involved in death squads (see Long, 1995a and 1995b; as well as Farah, 1995).

13. Attacks on the new ombudswoman, Victoria Velásquez de Avilés, precisely because of her integrity and independence, reached a fever pitch in May with a clearly orchestrated campaign on radio news programs that, among other things, called her a “communist.” In El Salvador’s recent past, such an epithet was not merely slanderous; it was a justification for killing people (see Palumbo, 1995).

14. The chiefs of mission were Iqbal Riza (Pakistan), July 1991-January 1993; Augusto Ramírez Ocampo (Colombia), March 1993-March 1994; and Enrique ter Horst (Venezuela), April 1994-April 1995. General Víctor Suanzes Pardo was acting Chief of Mission between Riza’s departure and Ramírez Ocampo’s arrival.

15. This list is not exhaustive but it does attempt to identify the most obvious and salient lessons for present and future missions, as well as for the United Nations headquarters.

16. Alvaro de Soto and Graciana del Castillo (1994: 69-83) have written persuasively about this issue.

17. MINUGUA’s Chief of Mission, Leonardo Franco, is also head of the human rights division.

18. Several ONUSAL officials recounted similar anecdotes: they were berated by a Salvadoran for imposing themselves on the country and violating national sovereignty. In each case, the official explained that the mission was in country as a result of the peace accords and at the express invitation of the national government. In each anecdote, the Salvadorean expressed surprise at this fact.

One may also criticize the Salvadoran government and media for not making this point as often as possible. A few speeches by President Alfredo Cristiani and other senior government officials, as well as government-paid ads in the media welcoming ONUSAL and explaining its role, would have prevented much misunderstanding and could have diffused an outrageous disinformation campaign against ONUSAL in the early months of the mission — a campaign ONUSAL was obliged to refute with paid ads.

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