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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

3 June 1985

MILITARY TRAINING IN EL SALVADOR

Thank you for your letter of 31 May about military training in El Salvador.

The Prime Minister agrees that we should stand by our original decision to offer military training and notes that it is now proposed to provide this at Sandhurst.

(CHARLES POWELL)

P.F. Ricketts, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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Prime Minister

Agree X?

AT 3/5

cc/c



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Yes nr

31 May 1985

Dear Charles,

Military Training for El Salvador

Following her meeting with President Duarte last July the Prime Minister wrote to him on 6 August agreeing to make available one or two Staff College places for suitably qualified Salvadorean officers.

In October the Salvadorean authorities informed our Charge d'Affaires that staff courses would be too sophisticated for their needs and enquired whether other types of training might be available instead. Following discussion with our Defence Attache at Mexico City who periodically visits El Salvador, they drew up a list of their priorities which was received by us on 8 January. The Ministry of Defence then considered which courses would best meet the Salvadorean suggestions and it was decided that courses at the Royal Military College Sandhurst would be most appropriate for their needs.

The Salvadorean delay in deciding on the type of training they needed has made it unlikely that training can start before 1987 instead of 1986 as we originally hoped. Places for courses at Sandhurst are allocated in the February of the year before that in which the course begins, and places for the course starting in 1986 were thus allocated last February. Only if there are cancellations will Salvadoreans be able to attend. We have asked the Ministry of Defence to give priority to Salvadorean applications for cancelled places and asked the Salvadoreans to expedite their applications.

There has, predictably, been a good deal of hostility from some quarters in this country to the decision to extend our cooperation with El Salvador in this way. Since 13 February, when the Government's offer to President Duarte for training for military officers in Britain was referred to publicly by the Salvadorean Army Chief of Staff, 20 PQs have been put down and the FCO has responded to 182 MPs letters and some 453 letters from members of the public criticising the Government's decision.

The great bulk of this activity appears to have resulted from an extensive and largely inaccurate lobbying campaign, much of it instigated by a circular letter issued by OXFAM 3000,

/a political



a political offshoot of OXFAM which encouraged its supporters to write to their Member of Parliament and Ministers. Lady Young took up with the OXFAM Director the question of their apparent involvement in questionable political activity. Mr Stringer explained that OXFAM 2000 is a self-financed and separate organisation over which the main OXFAM management do not exercise control. The other major British charitable organisations and many Church groups have also been strident in their condemnation of our offer of military training for El Salvador.

Despite all this, no significant reason has been offered for reconsidering our original decision. The Foreign Secretary is in no doubt that we should go on presenting it positively. He is also considering more generally the role of charities in promoting or supporting political campaigns of this kind. It would clearly be unwise, in his view, to court the risk of "Minister slams OXFAM" type headlines and he has asked for the search to concentrate on less direct, but probably more effective methods.

*Yes evr,*

*Peter Ricketts*

(P F Ricketts)  
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq  
10 Downing Street

EL SALVADOR, Internal Sit, Dec 1981



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