

# Salvador Certification Sparks Debate

By Jim Lackey

Washington (NC) — The Reagan administration's certification July 27 that El Salvador is making progress in human rights has sparked a heated debate between supporters and opponents of continued military aid to the Central American nation.

A senior administration official at a congressional hearing described El Salvador's progress as "marred but real."

But church and human rights groups that oppose military aid to El Salvador said there is sufficient evidence to show that conditions for certification are not being met.

A second administration official, at the same congressional hearing,

admitted that certification was "a close call" but disputed a charge by Rep. Gerry E. Studds (D-Mass.) that the 48-page certification report was, in Studds' words, "fundamentally a dishonest document."

President Reagan, in a nationally televised news conference July 28, also defended the certification report, sent to Congress by the State Department.

"I'm quite sure there are unfortunate things that are going on (in El Salvador)," said Reagan. But he cited El Salvador's "great turnaround," including the March 28 elections in which Salvadoran citizens "went to the polls to vote for order in government."

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops, which

opposes military aid to El Salvador, had no immediate comment on the certification.

Two civil rights groups — the American Civil Liberties Union and the Americas Watch Committee — issued a joint rebuttal to several points in the certification report.

The rebuttal also maintained that political violence has shifted to rural areas where many deaths go uncounted by humanitarian agencies or the press.

The two groups disputed State Department claims that El Salvador's government had made a "demonstrable attempt" to control its armed forces, noting that none of the cases in which military officials had been arrested had been brought to trial.

The administration official who described El Salvador's progress as "marred but real," Assistant Secretary of State Thomas O. Enders, also cited El Salvador's strategic importance to the United States as a reason for continuing military aid.

"Should it fall to a Cuban and Nicaraguan-backed armed minority, what country in Central America would be secure?" he asked the House subcommittee which conducted the hearing.

Enders, referring to the March elections, also said that in one certification area — creation of democratic institutions — "the gains are very substantial."

He also remarked, "Little by little the violence appears to be receding."

The second administration official, Elliott Abrams, assistant secretary of state for human rights, said the central issue in El Salvador is democracy.

"Its strengthening will lead to a further reduction in human rights violations," said Abrams. "The current government must be given the opportunity to complete what it has begun."

Besides Studds, another subcommittee member skeptical of the certification was its chairman, Rep. Michael D. Barnes (D-Md.). Barnes said the report "isn't convincing" because reports of civilian deaths were not based on first-hand information.

But a third committee member, Rep. Henry Hyde (R-Ill.), defended El Salvador's progress and said observers often apply different human rights definitions to different countries, whether they be El Salvador or Israel.

Even before the certification was announced some church groups were protesting the decision.

The certification "flies in the face of evidence from the most reputable sources" about the situation in El Salvador, said Franciscan Father Alan McCoy, president of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men.

Maryknoll Sister Helene O'Sullivan, director of social concerns for her order,

disputed administration claims that progress was taking place in the investigations of the 1980 deaths in El Salvador of four American churchwomen.

"We believe that a reasonable assessment of the investigations suggests that responsibility for the crime may go beyond the enlisted men that have been arrested," she said.

To continue military aid to El Salvador Reagan is required to certify twice a year that the Salvadoran government "is making a concerted and significant effort to comply with internationally recognized human rights."

Reagan also must certify that the government "is achieving substantial control over all elements of its own armed forces..."

Last January, in the first certification report, Reagan also cited progress in the investigations of the deaths of the four churchwomen as well as two other American citizens killed a month later.

Shortly before the second certification report was released the Senate followed the lead of the House and voted 95-2 to require Reagan to again certify progress in the investigations.

Certification of progress in the El Salvador investigations had been

required only once because many in Congress believed trials in the cases would have been completed before the second certification was due.

The second certification also came in the same week that the Washington Post reported that a volunteer relief worker had been brutally tortured in National Police headquarters in El Salvador.

The State Department, without commenting on specific cases, said it had registered strong protests

with El Salvador's government over reported instances of torture.

White House spokesman Larry Speakers called torture "absolutely inexcusable."

He added, "While human rights abuses have not disappeared, there have been steps taken by the government to eliminate such abuses. We will continue to support these efforts as one of the main elements of our El Salvador policy."

Fr. Paul J. Cuddy



On the Right Side

## Inviting Others to My Dinner

Were you supplying in Waterloo recently?

Yes. Father Albert Shamon, with Father Foster Rogers, was scheduled for a month's theological studies at Louvain University, Belgium, July 3-Aug. 5. I was to supply July 3-30. The Waterloo parish summer festival was the week of the 12th and Father Robert Doell of St. Joseph's in Penfield was free to come for that week. This was ideal because he had been assistant at Waterloo and knew the festival chairman, his committee and the program. So I returned to Webster for the week.

You enjoyed the Waterloo mission?

Very much. The people are not interested in theological speculations, but many are seriously interested in religion. Before daily Mass a group of about 20 recite the rosary. Daily Mass attendance varies from 35 to 60. The parish has a choir of 30 voices developed by Florence Lombardi. A folk group under the direction of Bob Dinan sings during one Sunday Mass. Secretaries Mary Alice Dinan and Joyce Driscoll steered me in what to do. Sylvia Peterman Marcuccilli, the cook, was solicitous about making my 1,500-calories-a-day diet less painful. Because she is so superb a cook, I had as dinner guests Fathers Conboy and Heisel of Seneca falls, Ray Heisel of Mother of Sorrows, Elmer McNamara of E. Bloomfield, Bernard Newcomb of St. Cecilia's, Robert Kress of Rush, Gerald Kelly of Canandaigua, John Morgan of Marion and Msgr. John Duffy of Phelps. I hate eating dinner alone. Hospitality is a virtue recommended by St. Paul.

What did you do during your three weeks?

The traditional pastoral duties, including a 2 a.m. call to the hospital by Father Thomas Mull's mother who is night nursing supervisor. One hitch was untangled. When Father Stephen Kraus was transferred to St. Ann's, Rochester, Father Shamon was left alone. Father Donald Murphy had helped some weekends. The Gefell twins helped on others. When I came Saturday morning, it was unclear if anyone was coming, so I phoned Bishop Hickey: "Bishop, has anyone been engaged to help at Waterloo this weekend?" "I'm not in the personnel office anymore, but I don't think so."

Msgr. Joseph Sullivan had been retired only three days before and is living at the Gould Hotel in Seneca Falls, three miles away. I phoned him: "Could you take the 10 and noon Masses tomorrow?" "Yes. Be glad to." "Good. Do come for dinner tonight after the 5 p.m. Saturday Mass." So all was cared for properly.

Did you accomplish much good in Waterloo?

Oh yes! Besides the ordinary things, the parishioners had the opportunity to buy Archbishop Sheen tapes, "Treasury of Prayers" booklets, and Arch Books put out by the Lutherans, very good to introduce children to Bible stories.

More than 100 Sheen cassettes, 200 prayer booklets and a few Arch Books and Rosary Novena Booklets are planted like spiritual fruit trees in the parish.

Now the parish is establishing a cassette library with Archbishop Sheen, Father Bassett and other cassettes, with Kathy McCutcheon, CCD coordinator, in charge. All this makes a spiritual orchard which will bear much fruit.

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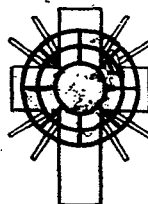
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