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## **Reagan Administration Notifies Congress Of Intent To Provide Salvadoran Police With \$9.1 Million In Equipment & Weapons**

*by Deborah Tyroler*

*Category/Department: General*

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The Reagan administration has notified Congress that it intends to supply \$9.1 million in equipment and weapons to the Salvadoran police in coming months, despite protests that the police continue to abuse human rights. A State Department letter to Congress Aug. 31 said Secretary of State George Shultz would authorize the funds within 30 days "for the purpose of training and equipping (Salvadoran) public-security forces." According to the State Department letter, supplies will include Remington police shotguns, 9 mm Beretta pistols, M16 rifles fitted with sniper scopes, vehicles, clothing and communications equipment. Congressional sources said that several members of the House will ask the Appropriations Committee to delay the proposal until there is a closer examination of the State Department's contention that the Salvadoran police have improved their rights record sufficiently. Some senators may also oppose the funds. The letter was intended to fulfill a congressional requirement that the department certify El Salvador "has made significant progress during the preceding six months in eliminating any human-rights violations, including torture, incommunicado detention, detention of persons solely for nonviolent expression of their political views or prolonged detention without trial." "The assistance program (for the Salvadoran police) has met, or exceeded, expectations across the board and has uniformly fulfilled the criteria of human-rights improvements on the part of the public security forces," an accompanying report from the department said. That assessment was disputed Sept. 8 by Americas Watch, a private organization that monitors human rights in Latin America. In a detailed report issued Aug. 29, Americas Watch said there is evidence to support charges that Salvadoran security forces, including the Treasury Police, continue to commit murder and other rights abuses. For several years, Congress barred the use of US military aid for police. After the June 19, 1985, murder by leftist insurgents of six US citizens, including four Marine guards at the US Embassy in San Salvador, Congress permitted use of some military assistance funds in the 1986 and 1987 fiscal years for police activities, with the proviso that the State Department certify every six months that human-rights progress is being made. On the following day, in a statement released in San Jose, Costa Rica, the Central American Human Rights Commission (CODEHUCA) said repression is on the upswing in El Salvador, and that it coincides with increased US aid to the police. According to CODEHUCA, human rights abuses are regular occurrences at the hands of armed plainclothes police. The Commission denounced the Sept. 1 kidnapping of a labor leader on the campus of El Salvador's National University by plainclothes police. The organization also denounced the Salvadoran police for the recent kidnappings of Gloria Galan Garcia and Lucia Menjivar Vazquez, leaders of the Committee of Mothers and Relatives of Political Prisoners, Missing and Murdered; and the shooting of striking Social Security Institute employees in July. In these incidents, dozens of people were wounded. (Basic data from WASHINGTON POST, 09/09/87; PRENSA LATINA, 09/10/87)

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