2-7-1992

Rand Corporation Perspective On U.S. Policy In El Salvador

Deborah Tyroler

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen

Recommended Citation


This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in NotiCen by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.
Rand Corporation Perspective On U.S. Policy In El Salvador

by Deborah Tyroler

Category/Department: General

Published: Friday, February 7, 1992

According to a study of US policy in El Salvador over the 1980-1990 period by Benjamin Schwarz of the Rand Corporation, Washington failed because policy was grounded on false assumptions. The study, titled "America's Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador," was funded by the Pentagon, and completed in September 1991. Schwarz stated that US strategists considered the Salvadoran civil war an "ideal" environment in which to demonstrate the efficacy of the low-intensity conflict (LIC) doctrine. Politicians apparently believed the Salvadoran government could defeat the insurgents if the regime had sufficient resources to win over the hearts and minds of average Salvadorans. The US supplied US$6 billion in aid with this objective in mind. According to Schwarz, Washington attempted to win the war through a combination of military efforts and socio-economic reforms. However, because Salvadoran military officers and politicians were aware that the US was primarily motivated by its own national security interests, they did not take Washington's threats of aid cutoff seriously. In effect, Salvadoran leaders knew the US would never permit the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) to take power. Next, Schwarz noted that in February 1990, Gen. Maxwell Thurman, then commander of the Panama-based US Southern Command, stated that since the Salvadoran government was still unable to defeat the rebels after 10 years, negotiations constituted the only way to end the fighting. Soon thereafter, and in a context of the end of the Cold War, domestic policy concerns, and a perceived need to focus on Russia and former Eastern Bloc nations, Washington endorsed a policy reversal in El Salvador. The change in policy supported negotiations mediated by the United Nations. (Basic data from Agence France-Presse, Spanish news service EFE, 01/20/92; Chinese news service Xinhua, 01/21/92)

-- End --