



V CONFERENCIA DE MINISTROS DE DEFENSA DE LAS AMERICAS

SANTIAGO DE CHILE 18 AL 22 DE NOVIEMBRE DE 2002

THEMATIC LINE 3: DEFENSE AND SOCIETY; THE POSSIBILITY OF REGIONAL COOPERATION

SUB-THEME 3C: ARMED FORCES AIDING IN THE EVENT OF NATURAL DISASTERS

SPEAKER : EL SALVADOR

AMERICA AND ITS GEOGRAFICAL LOCATION.

Due to its geographical location over the planet the american continent through out its history has been affected by different natural phenomenons such as earthquakes, hurricanes, tornados, volcanic eruptions, forest fires, floods and landslides caused by tropical storms.these phenomenons that have cost death and destruction on its path through the different regions of the continent.

EL SALVADOR'S GEOGRAFICAL LOCATION

El Salvador, with a land extensión of 20.620 square Km and a population of approximate six million two hundred seventysix thousand thirty-seven (6.276.037) people, is located on the central part of the American continent.

Throughout its land extension it is crossed by a volcanic chain that extends from south america to north america paralel to the Pacific Ocean and wich has caused many human and material losses throughout the history and continues to be a constant menace to the people that live on its surroundings. Also the region where it is located is constantly beaten by hurricanes and tropical storms causing destruction, specially because of the floodings, overflows of river or landslides wich affect populated areas.

Also what has caused the most destruction to the country, are the seismic movements, wich constantly threat all the region of Central America and part of North America, specifically the areas located over the volcanic chain of the American Continent.

BASIS OF THE LEGAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE ARMED FORCE DURING NATIONAL EMERGENCY SITUATIONS.

The Armed Force establishes the instructions for its branches (Army, Navy and Air Force) and units of institutional support to colaborate in the execution of plans, programs and projects related to national development or assistance to the civilian population in situation of national emergency in coordination with other state organizations, national and international institutions and friendly countries, without overlooking their constitutional mision wich is national defense.



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The institutional collaboration is based on the social function that the Armed Force accomplishes as an institution to the service of the nation in peace time; as it is also stipulated on the last paragraph of the article 212 of chapter VIII of the Constitution which literally says: the Armed Force will collaborate in public matters commended by the president and will assist the population in case of national disasters.

ROLE OF THE ARMED FORCE IN CASE OF DISASTERS.

The Armed Force of El Salvador, according with its constitutional mission and the established by the Law of Civilian Defense, keeps updated its planification of assistance to the people in case of disaster, whether it is a national or a regional case.

SAN BERNARDO PLAN

The Armed Force of El Salvador throughout its combat, tactical and institutional support units, in coordination with the National Emergency Committee (COEN), will assist civilian people affected by any event that generates disasters, throughout the national territory paying special attention to the high risk areas, in order to contribute in the effort of the institutions member of the National Emergency System (SISNAE).

This plan is oriented to assist the civilian people in cases of national disasters, caused by the following phenomenons:

- Floods
- Forest fires
- Volcanic eruptions
- Earthquakes
- Tropical storms
- Hurricanes

THE ARMED FORCE ASSISTANCE DURING THE EARTHQUAKES OCURRED ON JANUARY 13 OF 2001 AND FEBRUARY 13 OF 2001.

On January 13 2001, at about 11:36 hrs. El Salvador is violently shaken by an earthquake that affected the whole national territory, registered with a magnitude of 7.6 on the Richter scale, with a focal deepness of 32 Km. and its point of origin 55 Km. south of the beach "Los Blancos", which was followed by 3.496 replicas, that only incremented the anguish and desperation of all the salvadorean people.



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The assistance of basic needs were still been given to the people in the different shelters when a second earthquake shook salvadorean territory on february 13 at 08:22 hours, with a registered magnitude of 6.6 on the Ritcher scale, with a focal deepnes of 8.8 Km and its point of origin 32 Km. from the capital (San Salvador) in San Pedro Nonualco; this increased the damaged caused by the first earthquake, increasing the casualties and the number of people that were left homeless.

The units of the Armed Force in response to the emergency situation and according to the existing planifications, executed the "San Bernardo Plan" initiating immediately the assistance to the needed people, and simultaneously aerial and land reconnaissance. This last allowed determining priorities for the assistance to the people in the different affected areas according with the situation.

The governmet organizes the "National Emergency Committee" (COEN), beign the Armed Force one of its most important members, making available all their means (human and materials) to relieve the suffering of the people and collaborate in national reconstruction.

The priorities taken into account to assist the affected and **solve the most immediate social needs** were the following:

- Immediate assistance to the affected people.
- Construction of temporary shelters.
- Construction of temporary and permanent housings.
- Supply water and sanitation to the shelters.
- Repairment of damaged roads.
- Repairment of health units and schools.
- Reducing risks of future disasters.

DESTRUCTION CAUSED BY THE EARTHQUAKES

For both earthquakes statistics registered 1.149 casualties, 8.056 injured and 1.629.968 were homeless.

Damage to infrastructure is 336.000 partially or completely damaged homes, 24 hospitals and 111 health units severely damaged, 1.230 partially or completely damaged schools, in addition great damage caused to the main and secondary roads wich left isolated many populated areas throughout the country.



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THE ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE ARMED FORCE DURING THE DISASTERS WERE FOCUSED ON THE FOLLOWING:

- Reconnaissance of the affected areas.
- Search, rescue and evacuation of people.
- Transportation of rescuers and medics.
- Recovering bodies (casualties).
- Settlement of shelters.
- Sanitation services.
- Security patrolling
- Reception, transportation and distribution of aid.

The Armed Force making use of all their means of transportation available (aerial, land and naval) accomplished the evacuation of 68.777 people, which were transported to one of the 24 temporary shelters and 64 refuges that were simultaneously been constructed.

The communication system of the Armed Force allowed the President of the Republic to be in command and communicated with all emergency committees of each district, even with the most remote places of the country making it easier for the evacuations, supplies and satisfaction of the immediate needs of the people in order to achieve supply tasks, the Armed Force deployed a support battalion to the headquarters of the second aerial brigade. This battalion's mission was to "guarantee that the affected population received humanitarian aid fast, when needed and with transparency".

Using the structural organization, an amount of 8.923 tons of international aid and 9.000 tons of national aid were selected, stored and distributed.

The support battalion accomplished more than 70 aerial supply missions and 1.800 land supply missions, transporting the entire national and international aid to over 200 townships throughout the country.

Personel, water and food were transported to the different islands of the Fonseca Gulf and the Jiquilisco bay using units of the Marine Infantry.



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ACTIONS AFTER THE DISASTER.

Finally the Armed Force, contributed with other government institutions in the execution of national reconstruction programs, such as:

- Rubble removal.
- Road clearing.
- Tasks for reducing the risks.
- Construction of permanent housings.

CONCLUSIONS.

- 1.- The planning, coordination and integration of the Armed Force of El Salvador with the National Emergency Committee (COEN) and the prior exercises allowed a quick and efficient response to the disasters.
- 2.- The Armed Force communication system allowed the President to be in command and permanent communication with all the authorities and resources deployed for the managing of the crisis. Making the conduction of the operations at all levels easier.
- 3.- The location of its units and its military installations added to its training and capacity in the administration of disasters, increases the capacity of response of the country in support of the population in situations of emergency.
- 4.- The UHR-CFAC (Humanitarian Rescue Unit-Central American Armed Forces Confederation) responded according with the needs of the crisis. These participations in humanitarian and rescue operations strengthens more the democratic security frame treaty and the steps of mutual trust inserted in the process of integration.
- 5.- The fast international aid, from friendly foreign governments and foreign Armed Forces from out of the region, helped minimized the impact of the damages caused by the earthquakes.