
The Honduran Army: Training for the 21st Century

By

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Working in close partnership with the Honduran Army, the USMILGP Army Section has traditionally endeavored to help this valuable Central American ally achieve its goal of balancing a military force capable of ensuring the nation's territorial integrity with the financial constraints imposed by the nation's economy. Given the limitations imposed by diminishing Honduran military budgets and shrinking U.S. military assistance funds, this is at best a challenging task. However, it is a task being confronted and resolved.

HONDURAN ARMY COMPOSITION

The Honduran Army is a force built around light infantry units dispersed across the country, both in major population centers and more remote regions. It is organized into four brigades (the largest maneuver element in the Honduran military establishment) and a number of separate units and schools. Principal maneuver and combat support units include 14 infantry battalions, an airborne battalion, a Special Forces battalion, three field artillery battalions, a battalion of engineers, one signal battalion, and an armored cavalry regiment of battalion size; there are no assigned aviation units since all aircraft, both fixed and rotary wing, belong to the Air Force. The Army units are equipped with a mix of equipment from Western powers. Although some 90 percent is of U.S. manufacture (105mm and 155mm howitzers, HMMWVs, and most small arms), a sampling by country of origin reveals armored cars and light tanks from Great Britain; supplemental quantities of tactical trucks manufactured by Mercedes Benz in Germany; and light tactical vehicles of Israeli design. American observers may be surprised at the presence of veteran weapon systems such as the 106mm recoilless rifle; however, that system is ideal in the mountainous terrain of Central America, especially given its anti-personnel capacity. Materiel support is provided by the Army Logistical Command, a reinforced battalion size element located in Tegucigalpa, which provides virtually universal support in all classes of supply to units in all areas of the country.

Other units include primarily those devoted to military education, such as the Military Academy in Tegucigalpa, which is the alma mater of the overwhelming majority of Honduran Army officers; the Army Military Training Center in Juticalpa (about a two hour drive east of the capital), where new recruits receive their initial entry training; the Technical School, a long-standing institution now moving into newly inaugurated facilities constructed almost exclusively through U.S. cooperation; and the School of Application, which conducts courses for senior lieutenants and new captains at the level of the U.S. Army Advanced Course or U.S. Air Force Squadron Officer School. An academic institution in San Pedro Sula, the country's second largest city, is the Military Lyceum of the North, with elementary, secondary, and post-secondary classes conducted by a mix of active duty military and civilian instructors. Graduates of that school earn reserve commissions in the Honduran Army.

FOREIGN MILITARY SALES INITIATIVES

The American perspective of national security normally begins at the Nation's boundaries and extends outward. The Honduran Army, of course, has this role, but its missions include contributions to internal security as well. Those missions range from support to law

enforcement agencies, to controlling smuggling operations involving illegal aliens, narcotics, and stolen vehicles, to environmental protection.

The Honduran Army FMS program currently has over \$9,000,000 remaining in U.S. guaranteed loans and residuals. After a review of current requirements and priorities by representatives from the Honduran Army and the USMILGP Army Section, the number of active cases was reduced from around eighty to fifty. Major categories include:

<u>TYPE OF CASE</u>	<u>VALUE</u>
Maintenance and spare parts	\$3,800,000
Honduran Army Technical School	1,500,000
Ammunition	1,400,000
Other training cases	700,000
Demining	300,000
Other cases (publications, automation equipment, hospital supplies, small construction projects)	1,300,000
Total	\$9,000,000

While the article, "Military Training and Education in Honduras," appearing elsewhere in this issue, addresses the broad themes of FMS and IMET in Honduras, there are three points which merit additional comment. The first relates to the critical need for logistics management support. The abundance of support from different nations in the past left large quantities of equipment and parts in Honduras, most of which are not interchangeable. The Logistics Extended Training Support Specialist (ETSS) Team, which is nearing the end of its programmed life in Honduras, performed yeoman efforts to ensure the Hondurans identified the stocks and quantities on hand, then organized the materiel in a useable manner, and finally controlled the issue to units throughout the country and the consumption of ever more scarce resources. Late last year, the LOG ETSS finished its inventory of Honduran warehouses; MAJ De Los Santos' article later in this report illustrates this as a Herculean feat. The LOG ETSS continues its checks of maintenance and storage facilities, but its major contribution now is in building the capabilities of our allies to maintain the systems jointly implemented.

A second FMS aspect meriting particular comment relates to the use of noncommissioned officers, an inherent and indispensable characteristic of the U.S. Army. For a variety of reasons Honduras, like many nations in the developing world, lacks a strong corps of NCO supervisors. Through his example, the American NCO detailed to the Drill Instructor ETSS at the Army Military Training Center illustrates the incalculable value of fine NCOs in training and training development. Developing this echelon of leadership is vital for the future; important inroads are being made to broaden the concept of NCO leadership.

Finally, the Honduran Army inaugurated the new Technical School last year, the result of extensive U.S. investment in physical facilities and sophisticated equipment. This school provides our hosts not only with what is perhaps the best vocational training facility in the region but also, through the high quality of the training being accomplished there, will attract

the nation's youth into the armed forces, allowing a successful transition from a conscript to a volunteer military force.

OTHER ARMY TRAINING PROGRAMS

Training activities reach far beyond those funded by U.S. Security Assistance monies. One example is the series of combined exercises conducted in Honduras or elsewhere in Latin America where Honduran contingents participate, discussed in greater detail in the articles by COL Weidner and COL Prasek. Such activities not only foster and enhance regional cooperation and trust, but offer the participants the opportunity to employ and refine their skills in a variety of challenging scenarios.

Contributing to the professional education of the Honduran officer corps, a personnel exchange program established between the Honduran and American Armies permits the U.S. Army School of the Americas (SOA) to swap an officer instructor with the Honduran Armed Forces Command and General Staff School. Each officer enjoys unique opportunities to contribute to the development and professional growth of his foreign counterparts while serving in a foreign country. As an aside, the Honduran contribution to SOA is supplemented by the addition of a guest instructor in addition to the exchange officer; one or both normally work directly with the CGSC students at Fort Benning.

Deployments for training are other invaluable means by which U.S. units can operate with Hondurans in tactical settings. Such exercises prove to be of mutual benefit: CONUS-based units receive experience in theater while participating Hondurans take a break from other activities to dedicate themselves to their land combat orientation.

Orientation visits to the United States through allocations of the Secretary of the Army's Latin American Cooperation Fund are superb vehicles for sponsoring military-to-military contacts between Honduran and U.S. leadership. In the past year and a half, such visits facilitated a meeting by the TRADOC commander and the current Honduran Commander in Chief to discuss peace operations in preparation for the deployment of two contingents to Haiti; demonstrated to the logistics leadership of the Joint Staff the value of effective vehicle maintenance programs at Aberdeen Proving Grounds; and laid out the latest changes in Civil Affairs doctrine for the new chief of civil affairs in the Honduran Army.

Armies in the world's democracies are undergoing substantial change, and Honduras is no exception. Successful armies are those which recognize changes and adapt. The USMILGP Army Section continues its unyielding support of our host nation's army as it adjusts and changes to better serve the democracy which is Honduras.