

GUATEMALAN ARMY WAGED 'GENOCIDE,' NEW REPORT FINDS

By MIREYA NAVARRO

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GUATEMALA, Feb. 25— A truth commission report made public today concluded that the United States gave money and training to a Guatemalan military that committed "acts of genocide" against the Mayans during the most brutal armed conflict in Central America, Guatemala's 36-year civil war.

The report, by the independent Historical Clarification Commission, contradicts years of official denials of the torture, kidnapping and execution of thousands of civilians in a war that the commission estimated killed more than 200,000 people.

Although the outlines of American support for Guatemala's military have been well known, the nine-volume report confirms that the Central Intelligence Agency aided Guatemalan forces.

The commission listed the American training of the officer corps in counterinsurgency techniques as a key factor that "had a significant bearing on human rights violations during the armed confrontation."

[...]

That support helped Guatemalan military and paramilitary units engage in kidnapping, torture and executions, a staff member of the commission said. The aide, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said the panel also found evidence that the United States had knowledge of genocide and still supported the Guatemalan military.

The commission, set up as a part of a United Nations-supervised peace accord that ended the war in 1996, concluded that either the Government or allied paramilitary groups were to blame for more than 90 percent of the 42,000 human rights violations, 29,000 of which resulted in deaths or disappearances. That attributes a somewhat higher percentage of deaths to the Government and its allies than did a report last year by the Roman Catholic Church.

The commission, which conducted an 18-month investigation, specifically named military intelligence as the organizer of illegal detentions, torture, disappearances and executions, but it stopped short of identifying individuals responsible.

As the conclusions were read at a solemn ceremony at the National Theater, rights workers, relatives of victims and others among the 2,000 people broke into standing ovations, sobs, shouts and chants of "Justice! Justice!"

The outbursts repeatedly interrupted the presentation as President Alvaro Arzu Irigoyen and Cabinet members sat silently in the first row.

While the scope of the bloodshed had been generally known, the report today is the first by an internationally supported panel to blame the Government and its military allies. In unexpectedly strong language, it describes the policy of the Government and military at the height of the war as genocide.

The report's estimate of more than 200,000 deaths is slightly higher than previous figures, and the number of documented massacres substantially exceeds previous figures.

The war, which began in 1960, pitted a rightist military-controlled Government against a classic Latin American left-wing insurgency. In waging a war largely in the hinterlands where Mayans lived, the military assumed that the Mayans sympathized with the insurgents and provided them with supplies, information and shelter.

As a consequence, entire Mayan villages were attacked and burned and their inhabitants were slaughtered in an effort to deny the guerrillas protection. The report said the Mayans paid the highest price when the military identified them as natural allies of the guerrillas.

The result, the report said today, was an "aggressive, racist and extremely cruel nature of violations that resulted in the massive extermination of defenseless Mayan communities."

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