

May 22, 1985

THE NEW GUATEMALA DESERVES U.S. SUPPORT

INTRODUCTION

Guatemala seemed to fascinate the United States in the late 1970s. The Carter Administration and the press focused intensively on reports of political violence and human rights abuses in that Central American country. Indeed, Carter cut off U.S. military assistance to Guatemala in 1977. In recent years, much less attention has been paid to this nation of seven million spread along Mexico's southern border. And that is a pity, for Guatemala's leaders have initiated significant political reforms to propel their nation toward democracy. The army, meanwhile, has adopted a strategy for protecting the Indian population in the war against Marxist guerrillas. Guatemala's recent progress surely deserves as much attention now as its troubles did nearly a decade ago.

Just last July, Guatemalans voted for a Constitutional Assembly, and the balloting was judged free and fair by a host of international observers. Presidential elections are scheduled to be held in October 1985. Even the United Nations has certified Guatemala's progress. A U.N. Special Rapporteur for Human Rights issued a 1984 report citing improvement in human rights observance and refuting a number of allegations that the Guatemalan government of President Mejia Victores had committed atrocities. Another significant development was last month's peaceful settlement of a 13-month labor-management confrontation at a Coca-Cola bottling plant, proving that organized labor activism no longer is being systematically repressed.¹

¹ Stephen Kinzer, "At Embattled Guatemala Coke Plant, Peace Reigns," The New York Times, April 29, 1985.

Current U.S. policy is a holdover from the Carter years, keeping Guatemala at arm's length. Surely this no longer serves U.S. interests in light of Guatemala's geopolitical importance in Central America. A resurgence of Guatemala's Marxist guerrilla movement could undermine the progress toward democracy being made in neighboring El Salvador and encourage further subversive efforts in the region by Nicaragua and Cuba. It could set off a destabilizing chain reaction in Mexico, already troubled by the disruptive presence of Guatemalan refugees and leftist guerrillas on the fringes of its most productive oil fields.

Improvements in Guatemala's human rights record and its steps toward political liberalization should be supported by the U.S. Washington should provide economic and military assistance to Guatemala to support its transition to an elected civilian government. Economic growth in Guatemala not only would ease its move to democracy but would aid regional economic development. Economic assistance is needed, too, to help the country weather balance of payments and foreign exchange problems, which are partly caused by regional political turbulence. The civic action and development programs of the Guatemalan armed forces and the Committee for National Reconstruction for the highland Indian population should be bolstered by U.S. technical and material assistance. Security assistance in the form of training and non-lethal equipment is needed to secure the gains made in the guerrilla war and to support the Armed Forces' recent moves toward fuller respect for human rights and the democratic process.

FORTY YEARS OF POLITICAL STRUGGLE

In the past four decades, Guatemala's politics have been plagued by polarization, weak institutions, and leftist guerrilla insurgencies, the most recent aided by Cuba. Guatemala's political turmoil began with the 1944 revolution, mounted by reformists determined to remedy the injustices and corruption of the Jorge Ubico regime. As typically happens with such movements, the reformists lost control of events to a dedicated and well-organized group of communists with ties to Moscow. Growing communist influence in the administration of President Jacobo Arbenz, elected in 1951 following the assassination of his anti-communist opponent, Chief of the Armed Forces Francisco Arana, alarmed the Guatemalan armed forces and Washington. Ronald M. Schneider, author of an early history of the Arbenz period, writes that "By the time the Arbenz regime was three years old, the Communists, through their relationship with the President, control of the labor movement, penetration of the bureaucracy and influence over other revolutionary parties were in a position to shape government policies... to an extent greater than any communist party outside of the Soviet orbit."²

² Ronald M. Schneider, Communism in Guatemala 1944-1954 (New York: Holt Rinehart Winston, 1959).

In June 1954, an exiled Guatemalan colonel, Carlos Castillo Armas, supplied by the U.S. and supported by Honduras and Nicaragua, led a force of a few hundred men into Guatemala from Honduras. Though the Guatemalan army could have halted the Armas forces, army leaders refused to support Arbenz, who resigned on June 27, 1954.

Arbenz' resignation was followed by further political turmoil, including the assassination of his successor, Carlos Castillo Armas, and violence ridden elections in 1958. Guatemala was governed by military-appointed leaders until the 1966 election of Julio Cesar Mendez Montenegro, who attempted to curb the political role of the military and to "civilianize" Guatemalan society. Montenegro launched a major counterinsurgency campaign, which broke up the guerrilla movement in the countryside. The guerrillas then concentrated their terrorist activities in the capital, which led to a spiral of political violence by the guerrillas and self-appointed vigilante groups. In this period, a series of military officers ran Guatemala, coming to office through what are generally viewed as fraudulent elections. Discontent with the political system mounted. A cycle of political violence by extremists of the left and right, disapproval of the government's heavy-handed tactics against leftist opposition, and diplomatic isolation led a group of young military officers to stage a coup d'état in March 1982. What triggered their action was the apparent fraud in the 1982 elections.

RECENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN GUATEMALA

Retired General Efraim Rios Montt emerged as the leader of the 1982 coup and was declared President and Minister of Defense by the junta. His public statements signaled a determination to adopt a more constructive counterinsurgency strategy against the guerrillas, attack public corruption, and restore political freedom in Guatemala.

Rios Montt's initiatives in countering the guerrillas through amnesty for members of the guerrilla movement, civic action programs for the Indian communities, and changes in the army's tactics weakened the guerrilla movement considerably. Other government measures, however, such as the establishment of special courts to try anti-government subversives and terrorists and the suspension of constitutional guarantees, did little to dampen international hostility.

Having failed to improve diplomatic relations with Guatemala's neighbors or mend its reputation abroad, Rios Montt was replaced in an August 1983 coup by General Oscar Mejia Victores. He moved quickly to restore constitutional guarantees and abolish the special courts. The clearest sign of the leadership's determination to restore political freedoms was last July's election for a Constitutional Assembly. The new, 88-member Assembly has a mandate to draft a new constitution and legislation governing political parties and the 1985 presidential election.

The July vote, certified free and fair by international observers, was noteworthy because the turnout was estimated at over 70 percent of some 2.6 million registered voters. Two centrist parties, the Christian Democrats and the new Union of the National Center, won 22 seats each in the Assembly. This indicates that there is a consensus on the need for reform.³ In a further break with the past, four Indians won seats in the new Assembly.⁴

GUATEMALA'S GEOPOLITICAL ROLE IN CENTRAL AMERICA

With its more than seven million inhabitants and a \$9 billion economy, Guatemala is Central America's richest and most populous country. Staunchly anti-communist, and described by Forbes magazine as the "free enterprise linchpin of the floundering Central American Common Market" because of its tradition of limited state intervention in the economy, Guatemala should be the natural anchor for U.S. policy in Central America.⁵

Guatemala's geopolitical importance in Central America also should be a factor in U.S. policy considerations. Political developments in Guatemala, especially the outcome of the guerrilla insurgency and the current government's moves toward political reform, will have far-reaching repercussions on four key situations in Central America.

1) Territorial dispute between Guatemala and Belize.⁶

As was demonstrated by the 1982 confrontation over the Falkland Islands, territorial disputes in Latin America, especially those involving a European ally of Washington, can damage U.S.-Latin American relations. This could be the case regarding the ongoing tension between Guatemala and Belize, a British colony (known as British Honduras until 1981). Stretches of the Belize-Guatemalan border are in dispute. Tensions between the two countries are sure to rise when Britain withdraws its 1,800-

³ "Guatemala Vote Clean: Moderates Triumph," Washington Report on the Hemisphere, Vol. 4, No. 21, July 24, 1984.

⁴ William A. Orme, Jr., "Guatemalan Indians Try Politics," Washington Post, July 12, 1984.

⁵ Allan Dodds Frank, "Guatemala: The Ultimate Price," Forbes, May 10, 1982, p. 109.

⁶ Belize formally gained independence from Great Britain in 1981, but due to a territorial dispute that dates back to the 19th century, Guatemala has refused to recognize its independence and claims two-thirds of its territory. Great Britain maintains an 1,800-man garrison in Belize to safeguard its new status, but the \$50 million expense has led it to announce that its presence is for "an appropriate period only." U.N. sponsored talks between Britain, Belize, and Guatemala have broken down repeatedly.

man garrison from Belize. A prompt settlement of the Guatemalan-Belize problem would enhance regional stability and remove a pretense for Cuba to intervene. The prospects for a negotiated settlement are brighter if the U.S. strengthens ties with Guatemala and can act effectively as mediator.

2) Consolidation of democratic pluralism in El Salvador and containment of Nicaragua.

The outcome of the guerrilla war in Guatemala could have repercussions for El Salvador and Nicaragua. Should the Guatemalan guerrillas defeat government forces, or hold onto substantial territory, the Marxist regime in Nicaragua would be bolstered. Further Cuban and Nicaraguan subversion in the region would be encouraged. On the other hand, definitive defeat of Guatemala's armed insurgency could dampen the enthusiasm of El Salvador's guerrilla movement, much as the successful U.S. intervention in Grenada did, and even discourage Cuban support for Marxist insurgencies in Central America. It also would be a major setback for the Nicaraguan Marxists' plan to spread their revolution throughout the region.

3) Implications for Mexican stability.

Despite the leftist rhetoric that pervades Mexican foreign policy statements, the government of Mexican President Miguel de la Madrid is clearly concerned about the security of Mexico's southern oil fields, where the Mexican state of Chiapas shares a guerrilla-infested, 584-mile border with Guatemala.⁷ A 4000-man quick reaction force was formed in 1982, in the words of a Mexican official, "to defend the country's southern border and lucrative oil fields against a possible spillover of Central America's turbulent guerrilla wars."⁸ He clearly was referring to the Guatemalan guerrilla insurgency.

Guatemala's Marxist guerrillas also pose a serious political dilemma for Mexico's ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party or PRI. National security concerns about an overflow of guerrilla activity into Mexico could seem to tarnish the PRI's "revolutionary" credentials.⁹ Just how sensitive the Guatemalan question is for Mexican policy makers is apparent from the vivid contrast between

⁷ In the last few years, additional troops have been sent to the region, military maneuvers have been conducted in the southern states, and military officers have replaced civilians as governors for Chiapas and Tabasco.

⁸ Marlise Simons, "Mexico Trains Quick Reaction Force," Washington Post, February 2, 1982.

⁹ See Esther Wilson Hannon, "Mexico's Growing Problems Challenge U.S. Policy," Heritage Foundation Background No. 373, August 16, 1984, and R. Bruce McColm, "Mexico: The Coming Crisis," Journal of Contemporary Studies, Vol. VII, No. 3, Summer 1984 for analysis of the Mexican political situation.

its vociferous pro-revolutionary stance regarding El Salvador and Nicaragua and the extreme caution of rare official pronouncements regarding Guatemala.¹⁰

4) U.S.-Guatemalan relations and the Contadora process.

U.S.-Guatemalan relations were friendly until 1975, when the U.S. halted shipment of military equipment to Guatemala to allay British fears of a Guatemalan invasion of Belize. Guatemala turned to other supply sources for equipment and training, but the U.S. decision soured U.S.-Guatemalan relations.

Resentment by the Guatemalan government over the 1975 episode grew as the U.S. Congress increasingly tied foreign assistance to human rights practices in recipient nations, especially under Carter Administration foreign policy decisions. In March 1977, Guatemala unilaterally renounced its military assistance agreements with the U.S., citing the congressionally mandated annual human rights reports as unacceptable intervention in its internal affairs.

The chill between Washington and Guatemala has thawed somewhat as a result of the Reagan Administration's efforts to provide some military assistance to Guatemala. Washington, moreover, has sought to avoid public criticism of Guatemala. For its part, the Guatemalan government distrusts Nicaragua's Marxist Sandinista regime as much as, if not more, than Washington does. Yet the still cool U.S.-Guatemalan relations impede cooperation between the two on regional matters. In the Contadora negotiations on a Central American peace treaty especially, Guatemala veers away from the U.S. and backs Mexico's pro-Sandinista stance. Guatemalan dependence on Mexican oil and Mexican cooperation in controlling border guerrilla activity give Guatemala significant short-term reasons for aligning with Mexico. Improved U.S.-Guatemalan relations, however, could prompt Guatemala to take a more balanced position in the Contadora negotiations.

THE GUERRILLA MOVEMENT

The current guerrilla insurgency in Guatemala has been rebuilt from an earlier, smaller movement that was largely defeated by the armed forces in the late 1960s. Survivors of that movement visited Cuba, North Vietnam, and other Marxist Third World countries and then, in 1972, founded the EGP (Spanish acronym for the Guerrilla Army of the Poor). By 1980 it was strong enough to

¹⁰ See Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, "Mexico and the Guatemalan Crisis, in The Future of Central America: Policy Choices for the U.S. and Mexico, Richard R. Fagen and Olga Pellicer, eds. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1983) for a detailed discussion of conflicts within the Mexican government on its Guatemalan policy.

operate in six highland departments of Guatemala. In contrast to its predecessor's failure, the EGP adopted a "prolonged war" strategy, operating in the remote highlands and living off the Indians, while also using them as a shield against army attacks. At a 1980 press conference in Havana, the EGP announced a merger with three other armed groups,¹¹ arranged by Nicaragua's Marxist leaders, to form the URNG (Spanish acronym for Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union).

¹¹ See Sol W. Sanders, "The 'battle for Central America' may be in Guatemala," Business Week, March 22, 1982, p. 50.

There is substantial evidence that Cuba and Nicaragua provide training and weapons for the Guatemalan guerrillas. This is clear from the testimony of captured guerrillas and of Miguel Bolanos, a Nicaraguan defector who had been a Sandinista intelligence officer. Bolanos reports that Guatemalan guerrillas were trained in special Nicaraguan camps established for the purpose, and that the Sandinistas have shipped arms to Guatemala across the Mexican border.¹² A defector from a Guatemalan rebel group stated that she had been trained in Cuba and Nicaragua.¹³ The Background Paper on Central America, released by the U.S. Department of State and Department of Defense in 1983, further documents Nicaraguan ties to the Guatemalan insurgency, noting that "several vehicles captured at the safehouses (in Guatemala City, April and July 1981) bore recent customs markings from Nicaragua."

FIGHTING THE INSURGENCY

Under President Rios Montt, the Guatemalan army adopted a new counterinsurgency strategy. Recognizing that the allegiance of the vulnerable civilian population of the highlands was the key to quashing the insurgency, the government launched a broad program of both security and development assistance for Indian communities. Its purpose is to suppress the insurgency, protect civilians in the areas of conflict, and improve the Indian population's standard of living.

The Plan of Action for the Areas of Conflict (PAAC) was launched in July 1982. It resettles internal refugees who have abandoned their homes and villages, either in fear of the army or because of guerrilla coercion. The program first provides food, clothing, and work to the refugees. Then it returns them to their original villages or settles them in newly built communities;

¹² Louis S. Segesvary, Guatemala: A Complex Scenario, CSIS Significant Issues Series, Vol. VI, No. 3, (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University, 1984), p. 32.

¹³ Prensa Libre, January 9, 1983, interview with Edgar Giron Castillo.

government and private sector assistance is available for agricultural development and infrastructure. Finally, the government builds schools, clinics, churches, water-supply systems, and roads.

Rios Montt's PAAC, or "beans and rifles" program, organized local civil defense patrols, under the direction of the departmental army command. Usually including all men aged 18 to 55, and numbering altogether about 900,000, they guard roads, patrol villages, protect crops, and alert the army of suspected guerrilla activity. A guerrilla document captured in 1982 by the Guatemalan army confirms the deterrent effect of the patrols.¹⁴ And a United Nations report states that "The security they provide, particularly to remote communities, enables the population to continue living in their traditional villages, whereas the army could not possibly provide such protection."¹⁵

HUMAN RIGHTS IN GUATEMALA

Two recent reports that have examined alleged human rights abuses in Guatemala, as well as methods for reporting such incidents, are the United Nations Commission of Human Rights 1984 Report on the situation of human rights in Guatemala, and Guatemala: A Complex Scenario, by Louis S. Segesvary, published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Both conclude that reports of human rights abuses in Guatemala at times have been seriously distorted or misconstrued by observers.

Segesvary notes, for example, that Amnesty International's July 1983 Special Briefing, which was very critical of the Guatemalan government, was not based on first-hand investigation in Guatemala, but relied on information supplied by "opposition groups." These included the four main Marxist-oriented guerrilla organizations and often unidentified "foreign journalists." Segesvary also notes that Amnesty International generally does not report terrorist activities carried out by guerrillas, even when the guerrillas claim credit for them.

The U.N. 1984 Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Guatemala, prepared on the basis of the Rapporteur's extensive travel throughout Guatemala, also reveals that reports of a number of alleged government abuses were unfounded. There had been, for example, widely carried stories of a Guatemalan army massacre of civilians. After extensively researching the incident, the U.N. Rapporteur concluded that "the story is total fabrication and had not been previously checked by any outside reporter before its publication." As for the grisly reports that the

¹⁴ Segesvary, op. cit., p. 11.

¹⁵ U.N. Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Guatemala, E/CN4/1984/30, p. 28.

army had bayoneted children, he says, "I saw for myself the army does not carry bayonets nor are their weapons of a type to which a bayonet can be fitted."¹⁶ The U.N. Rapporteur, investigating such allegations as government concentration camps and the army's scorched-earth practice, found no evidence to support either claim.

Probably equally false have been the reports that Indians have voluntarily gone over to the guerrillas. There often is little that is voluntary about the Indians' actions. The guerrillas have coerced the Indians by destroying their crops, burning homes, and murdering community leaders. Villagers were threatened with death if they tried to escape.¹⁷ Having interviewed many of those returning to their abandoned communities, the U.N. Special Rapporteur concludes: "This pattern, with insignificant variations, was recounted by many different groups, often newly arrived, over a large geographical area."¹⁸

ECONOMY

Guatemala's economy expanded rapidly in the 1970s, consolidating its strong position relative to other Central American economies. By year's end 1979, GNP reached \$7 billion, and debt service represented 2.2 percent of exports of goods and services, one of the lowest ratios in Latin America.¹⁹

Economic conditions, however, have deteriorated in the past four years. The annual average growth rate of 6.7 percent in 1976-1978 sank to zero in 1981 and declined in 1982 and 1983. Unemployment now runs at about 20 percent with annual inflation at 50 percent. International market factors, such as severely depressed coffee, cotton, and sugar prices and a sharp decline in demand from Guatemala's trading partners in the Central American Common Market, contributed to this abrupt economic reversal.²⁰ But regional political instability, politically inspired terrorism, and the ongoing guerrilla war also have been important factors. Private sector spokesmen note that private investment in Guatemala was high until the Marxists came to power in Nicaragua, undermining confidence in U.S. regional policy and prompting fear of Nicaragua's export of revolution. They also point to the travel advisory issued by the U.S. State Department in August 1981 as a deterrent to economic recovery.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁷ On a recent visit to Guatemala, this writer heard firsthand accounts of guerrilla recruitment tactics from a community leader in El Buen Samaritano and a newly arrived refugee from Acul.

¹⁸ U.N. Report, p. 11.

¹⁹ Inter-American Development Bank, Economic and Social Progress in Latin America, 1982, p. 262q.

²⁰ The CACM absorbed about 30 percent of Guatemalan exports.

Government corruption and mismanagement in recent years also have contributed to Guatemala's economic slide and capital flight. Exchange controls and taxes on imports and agricultural exports have weakened the private sector. The Mejia Victores government's April 1985 announcement of further tax and interest rate hikes were vigorously protested by civilian leaders. After nearly provoking a coup, the measures were rescinded.²¹

Despite its problems, Guatemala has outstanding potential for tourism, substantial natural resources, a diversified indus-

²¹ "Guatemala Withdraws Unpopular Tax Proposal," Washington Post, April 13, 1985.

trial base, and a tradition of private sector-led growth.²² Its prospects for recovery are good if investor confidence is regained and the private sector freed from unsound government intervention.

U.S. ASSISTANCE TO GUATEMALA

Economic

U.S. economic assistance to Guatemala has grown from \$10.8 million in FY 1981 to \$73 million appropriated by Congress for 1985. These sums, of course, are dwarfed by those for Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Honduras. The increases are much needed, given Guatemala's economic recession and the estimated \$300 million price tag for the government's development programs in the country's remote rural areas.

Guatemala needs more aid than it is receiving from the U.S. In FY 1985, the Reagan Administration requested \$35 million for Economic Support Fund (ESF) aid, but Congress appropriated only \$12.5 million. ESF assistance is designed to help the private sector weather supplier credit constraints during economic downturns, and it also gives the government some flexibility to settle balance of payments difficulties. The Administration also failed in its request for a \$81.1 million commodity credit guarantee for Guatemala under the Commodity Credit Corporation. This was blocked because Guatemala's standby agreement with the International Monetary Fund was suspended in May 1984, even though Guatemala has never been in arrears in this program. The White House and Congress thus should make increased economic aid to Guatemala a priority for U.S. Central American policy. As a

²² The Francisco Marroquin University in Guatemala City, under the direction of its founder and president, Manuel F. Ayau, has contributed powerfully to an understanding of the vital link between political and economic freedoms through its required courses on the meaning and operation of a free society.

start, a larger ESF appropriation and approval of the commodity credit guarantee would contribute substantially to economic recovery in Guatemala.

Military

U.S. military assistance has been withheld from Guatemala since 1977, on the basis of a congressional finding of "a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights." Important changes in the Guatemalan human rights situation suggest that a modest amount of U.S. military assistance to Guatemala should be approved.

The Reagan Administration is seeking \$10 million primarily for spare parts for helicopters, communications equipment, and trucks, rather than for lethal equipment.²³ This assistance is critical to the armed forces' ability to help protect civilians in the conflict zones. It would enhance communication between civil defense patrols and army units and allow army reinforcements to come to their aid more readily. Such logistical support for the civil defense patrols would not only increase their deterrent effect, but also reduce the casualties when rural villages and communities are attacked.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The U.S. should:

- ** State clearly its interest in Guatemala's move toward democracy and stress the importance of the presidential elections planned for 1985 to improved U.S.-Guatemalan relations.
- ** Encourage Guatemala to negotiate a settlement with Belize on their disputed border.
- ** Extend a commodity credit guarantee through the Commodity Credit Corporation and an Economic Support Fund allocation to Guatemala. Both are especially helpful to the private sector, and therefore contribute to Guatemala's economic recovery. Assistance through the ESF also will be helpful to the president elected this year, who will likely inherit balance of payments difficulties.
- ** Continue granting Guatemala assistance from the U.S., International Military Education and Training program (IMET), a professional military exchange program that promotes a better understanding of the U.S. political system and demo-

²³ Recent press reports that the Administration was requesting \$35.3 million in military assistance for Guatemala inaccurately included the \$25 million requested in Economic Support Fund aid as military assistance.

cratic institutions among foreign military officers. Guatemala was excluded from the program from 1977 until last year, when Congress approved \$300,000 for its participation.

- ** Review conditions inside Guatemala to determine whether it is necessary to continue the U.S. State Department travel advisory, which discourages Americans from visiting Guatemala.
- ** Provide military assistance to Guatemala under the Foreign Military Sales program, to allow its armed forces to buy spare parts for American-made equipment and transportation and communications gear. Such equipment is vital to the army's defense of civilians in scattered villages in the conflict zones and use of information provided by the civil defense patrols.
- ** Provide economic and technical support for the development of civic action programs, such as the "beans and rifles" program, in the Indian-populated highlands of the western departments. The Inter-American Foundation would be an appropriate channel for such assistance.
- ** Promote closer contact between U.S. organizations and associations and such pro-democratic groups and institutions in Guatemalan society as churches, labor unions, cooperatives, business associations, and universities. This should include scholarships and exchange programs from the Agency for International Development for Guatemalan students to study in the U.S.

CONCLUSION

Internationally isolated because of its past dismal human rights record, and locked in a draining war with a foreign-supported Marxist guerrilla insurgency, Guatemala is now seeking political and social change. Even without significant U.S. assistance, Guatemala has restrained political violence, established an open political environment for elections, and checked its Marxist insurgency. Such progress, the cornerstone of U.S. policy in Central America, should be acknowledged and supported in Guatemala.

To ensure continued progress, the U.S. should provide more than diplomatic backing for political reform, which is vulnerable to the twin pressures of economic recession and guerrilla warfare. Economic and military assistance would help Guatemala build upon its political progress and give the new government the capacity to provide security and development assistance to its isolated Indian population. U.S. interests and policy in Central America, combined with Guatemala's improved record, make this package of U.S. assistance timely and appropriate.

Virginia Polk
Policy Analyst