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SURVEY OF THE
GUATEMALA POLICE FORCES WEAPONS SYSTEM

REVIEWED AND DECLASSIFIED by John Weiss,
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FOREWORD

The Weapons Survey of the Guatemala Police Forces was conducted by the Office of Public Safety, Agency for International Development at the request of the US A.I.D. Mission to Guatemala. Specifically, the Mission requested, on June 16, 1970, the assistance of a Firearms Technician on a TDY basis to survey:

- a. Arms currently in the possession of the three major police agencies with respect to their adequacy, number and type.
- b. Maintenance and general state of repair of all arms.
- c. Repair and storage facilities.
- d. Reloading capabilities.

The information contained herein is not intended to be critical of any person or group. It is an actual inventory of the Police Force's arms supply and a survey of the condition of those arms, with recommendations concerning maintenance and repair in adequate numbers to meet the needs of the Force.

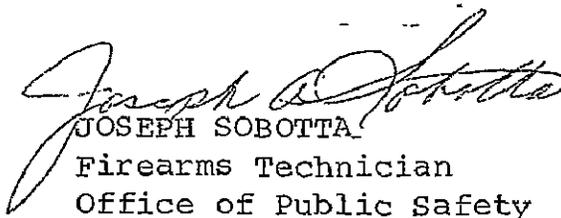
All information in this report has been checked as thoroughly as possible. However, with the limited time available for the study, it is possible some mistakes exist. For these the Technician assumes full responsibility and hopes they cause no serious difficulties or misunderstandings.

Sincere appreciation is expressed to the many persons who assisted in the conduct of the Survey, particularly Messrs LaBruzza and Guzman, and to the many who helped to

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make the Technician's stay in Guatemala more enjoyable. These include many officers of the Guatemala Police Force and the US A.I.D. Director and his staff.

The Technician appreciates the opportunity to participate in the project and sincerely hopes the study will prove useful.


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October 9, 1970

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SURVEY OF THE
GUATEMALA POLICE FORCES WEAPONS SYSTEM

BACKGROUND

The Guatemala Police Force is divided into the following four agencies:

- a. The National Police, subordinate to the Minister of Government, is charged with the protection of life and property and the maintenance of law and order. This Force numbers 4,941 officers and men, of which, approximately 3,294 are stationed in the capital. The remainder are deployed in other zonal commands similar to the military regional areas.
- b. The Border Patrol, also an agency of the Minister of Government, has as its mission the enforcement of tax and revenue laws, and the protection of the country's borders from illegal entry and smuggling. This Force numbers 1,040, the majority of which are assigned tasks outside the capital area.
- c. The Judicial Police Force is a combination of a secret service and intelligence agency, also subordinate to the Minister of Government. Its mission is the investigation of criminal and political crimes and the apprehension of offenders. There are 456 officers assigned to this Force, all in Guatemala City.
- d. Treasury Police are responsible for the control of shipment of goods in and out of the country at established ports and points of entry. This Force numbers 42 officers and is organized under the Minister of Finance.

Some 6,200 small communities of 200 or more people have no paid police. The local mayor, usually the Justice of the Peace, in addition to his administrative functions, selects one or more individuals from the community to serve for one or two years as local constabularies, frequently without pay.

These are not recognized as having formal police status by the Government, but are respected as the "lawmen" locally. Over 4,000 of these localities are organized farms constituting a form of company town work force. Some develop fairly sizable security units of their own, making governmental control largely unnecessary from the viewpoint of the farm owner.

Guatemala City is the principal and largest in the country, with Quezaltenango ranking second. About 70 per cent of all police weapons are in these two cities.

WEAPONS INVENTORY

Inventory of the weapons supply disclosed that there are too many different makes, models and calibers. For instance, of the 4,369 hand weapons there are 13 different types of revolvers and pistols in five different calibers. The newest of these weapons are Smith and Wesson Model 10, 38 caliber special, purchased as follows:

<u>Number</u>	<u>Year Purchased</u>
325	1963
10	1964
100	1966
1,250	1967
20	1968
25	1969

The following is a complete inventory of the Police Force's weapons.

<u>Make and Caliber</u>	<u>Quantity</u>
<u>Hand Guns</u>	
Smith & Wesson, 38 cal. special	2,289
Smith & Wesson, 38 cal.	458
Burgo German, 38 cal. special	1,379
Colt, 38 cal. special	198
Ruby Extra, 38 cal. special	26
Astra, 38 cal. special	8
Lurkin, 9 mm	4
Smith & Wesson, 32 cal.	1
B-O, 38 cal. special	-2
Parker, cal.	1

<u>Make and Caliber</u>	<u>Quantity</u>
<u>Hand Guns, continued</u>	
Star, 9mm	1
Star, 45 cal.	1
Sinmarca Revolver, 38 cal.	1
Total	<u>4,369</u>
<u>Submachine Guns</u>	
Malden cal. 9mm	170
Schmeisser cal. 9mm	52
Koko Hand cal. 9mm	8
Walther cal. 9mm	50
Thompson cal. 45	11
Reising cal. 45	35
M-3-A-1 cal. 45	<u>104</u>
Total	430
<u>Shoulder Weapons</u>	
M1 Carbines, 30 cal.	3,050
Remington 12 gauge shotguns	25
Savage 12 gauge shotguns	50
Gas guns, 37 mm	<u>6</u>
Total	3,131
GRAND TOTAL	7,930

Of the 4,369 hand guns, only 1,730 revolvers are in a "like new" or good condition. Since there are approximately 6,447 police officers on the Force, and it is the concensus of opinion that each officer should have his own side arm, this number is obviously inadequate. The number of M-1 carbines (3,050, 30 cal.) is adequate to meet Force needs, and the total submachine guns (430) exceeds their requirements. There were 25, 12-gauge shotguns listed on the weapons inventory. Fifty new Savage 12-gauge had arrived in the country but had not been placed on the weapons inventory list. Also, 70 additional 12-gauge were due in the country shortly after the departure of the writer. When these are received there will be only 145 shotguns on hand. This quantity is not considered adequate. It is estimated that a total of 600, 12-gauge riot shotguns will be required.

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CONDITION AND MAINTENANCE OF WEAPONS

General condition of most weapons is poor and very little maintenance is practiced. In most cases when a weapon does not function properly, it is set aside and forgotten. In some instances, limited repair is performed at the National Police Headquarters through weapon cannibalization. There are no spare parts in the entire arsenal, but even if there were, it is doubtful the personnel involved could make proper repairs -- simple field stripping of weapons could not be done.

Maintenance generally consists of wiping the external parts of the firearms with diesel fuel, with no regard for the internal parts. Although the writer was informed that a weekly inspection of arms is held, it is apparent the inspector does not know where to look, or for what. During conduct of the Survey, which included 450 miles into rural areas, the standard answer to the question: "Why the inadequate care and cleaning of the weapons?", was simply: "We don't have the materials". Only two four-ounce cans of oil were actually seen -- other cleaning materials, such as rods, brushes, etc., were found at only three major police stations. A list of tools requested for the Guatemala Armory Repair Shop was checked and found adequate, but the Shop is lacking in specialist-type tools required to do the job properly. A list of specialized tools by type and source of procurement was furnished by the writer.

Repair and storage facilities were found to be damp and improperly lighted. Much space is occupied by old, inoperable weapons stored in a disorderly fashion. In all the rural and frontier areas inspected, the situation was the same -- a small damp room or locker without ventilation was allotted for the storage of weapons and ammunition. These areas hold moisture which causes damaging rust on the equipment.

The plans of a new proposed building which will contain a repair, reloading and storage room were examined. These new facilities will alleviate the present problems,

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however, the writer pointed out that an exhaust blower should be included in the plans to provide for the discharge, outside the Shop, of debris caused by the cartridge case cleaning tumbler.

RELOADING CAPABILITIES

Reloading capabilities are adequate with one exception --- two utility lead melting pots are required. Other reloading equipment consists of:

- Star progressive reloaders - 3 each
- Star lubricators and sizers - 3 each
- Control feed-type electric furnaces - 3 each

There are also numerous bullet molds, a large supply of primers, powder and cartridge cases.

The one component needed and apparently hard to get is bullet alloy. Bullet alloy is of utmost importance --- without it production of reloads has come to a stop. A source of supply (from IPA) for this alloy was made known to the Mission. The availability of this alloy should be explored in full detail and the outcome made available to the Mission. If this excess alloy is not available for shipping, cost procurement of new bullet alloy should be ordered at once.

Procedures for casting bullets are crude and very slow, involving unnecessary effort on the part of the technician. A demonstration of the reloading system utilized at the International Police Academy was given the technician, and photographs depicting the IPA system have been sent to assist him in building new equipment. This one change will increase bullet production three-fold.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is recommended that the police convert to a standard three-weapon system:
 - a. Standard Smith & Wesson Model 10, 38 caliber, special
 - b. The 12-gauge shotgun, pump action
 - c. The M-1 carbine, 30 caliber
2. All unservicable and/or unrepairable equipment should be disposed of. The "Burgo" revolver, in particular, should be taken out of service, since this weapon has been found to be dangerously unreliable. Many misfires occur due to faulty springs and firing mechanism, and on numerous occasions the cylinders come open after firing one shot.

All weapons in disrepair should be put in safe working order.

3. Each policeman should be provided with a personal side-arm, preferably the Smith & Wesson 38 caliber special.

4. Shotguns, 12-gauge, should replace all submachine guns now extensively used throughout highly populated areas.

5. The M-1 carbine, 30 caliber, should be used in rural areas, not in the metropolitan areas.

6. A trained team should visit every unit, regardless of size, to instruct in proper maintenance and simple field stripping. Also, a competent senior officer should be assigned responsibility for weapons maintenance, repairs, storage and reloading.

7. All major units should make available a cleaning booth or stall containing all necessary cleaning materials and preservatives, so that each policeman can be held responsible for cleaning his own personal weapon. Unless this is done, and some action or examples made, the weapons now in good condition will rapidly deteriorate.

8. Adequate dry storage space should be provided at all Unit Headquarters. If the storage area is a small room or locker without ventilation, an electric light bulb should be installed and left burning continuously. The heat from the bulb would keep the air dry, thus alleviating the damaging moisture problem.

9. It is recommended that a central Unit be trained to handle repairs of all weapons for the entire Police Force. An adequate supply of spare parts and tools for the recommended three basic weapons be made available, and all major repairs be performed at the central armory repair shop. This Unit should consist of enlisted personnel who are mechanically inclined and specially trained for this purpose.

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ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS OBSERVED AND SUGGESTIONS FOR CORRECTION

Improper loading of Smith & Wesson revolvers. It was noted that the majority of policemen armed with the Smith & Wesson revolver had their weapons loaded with only five rounds of ammunition instead of six. When queried as to the reason for this, their response indicated they were of the impression it was dangerous to keep a live round under the hammer. It was pointed out this was not a fact and, in some cases, a weapon was taken apart to prove the point. Attention was directed to the safety factors of the S&W revolver, which make it virtually impossible to discharge a cartridge under the hammer when it is down.

Correction: Information should be disseminated to all policemen pointing out that these weapons are designed to carry six rounds safely, and stressing the desirability of full fire power, i.e., six rounds per revolver.

Disabling weapons unknowingly: The writer observed several policemen carrying S&W revolvers with tape or rubber wrapped around the end of the hammer spur. The reason given was they "had no holster" and that the covered hammer spur edges prevented "wearing holes" in their clothing. However, some men with holsters also carried weapons with covered hammer spurs. It was pointed out that with the spur covered, the gun can no longer be fired single action because the hammer is blocked. The obstruction prevents the weapon from being fully cocked, thus the revolver can be fired only double action, reducing their hit capabilities.

Correction: Issuance of appropriate explanatory instructions to remove the obstructions from revolver hammer spurs.

- Improper magazine care: There were only two magazines for each 30 caliber M-1 carbine. This precludes implementation of a rotation system. As a result, some magazines have been loaded over a year. Prolonged compression of carbine magazine springs may cause the springs "to set", causing the weapon to jam when used. A strong magazine spring is necessary for effective weapon operation.

Correction: Disassemble magazines, remove springs and stretch them by hand. Provide for rotation of magazines by obtaining additional units. There should be four to six magazines per carbine (this applies to all magazine fed weapons).

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Improperly constructed revolver holsters: While at the Border Police Headquarters, several policemen were observed holding their weapons in their holsters. Examination of these holsters revealed that because of faulty construction, if the revolver is put in the holster as intended, removal can be effected only by an exertion of considerable force. The belt loop that should go over and down the back of the holster, instead goes up and down the inside. Therefore, when a weapon is placed in the holster as it should be, the edge (bottom) of the loop locks on the top of the cylinder, making it virtually impossible to remove the weapon.

It has been determined that 4,000 of these holsters were procured by GSA Region 7 under Guatemala Public Safety PIO/C 5-70151. Purchase was effected October 6, 1967, from the Russell Uniform Company of New York. The holster is specified as a safety type New York Police style, black, top grain cowhide; unit price was \$2.50 each. Technical Services Division, Office of Public Safety, records do not indicate any reports from the Mission as to the unsatisfactory aspects of this commodity.

Correction: A sample of the holster was obtained and brought back to the Office of Public Safety's Technical Services Division to determine if the vendor can be held at fault at this late date. Also, TSD and IPA personnel will experiment with the holster to ascertain if correction in design is possible. Assistance of the Russell Uniform Company will be requested, and if a correction is feasible, it will be accomplished by the Mission.

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X. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this survey, a weapons technician is required on a full-time basis to properly implement the weapons program in Guatemala. In the opinion of this technician, not enough good equipment is being sent to the rural and frontier areas.

The PSD Staff in Guatemala City provided transportation and personnel during the survey. Particular appreciation is expressed to Messrs. La Bruzza and Guzman for their assistance and contribution of long hours. Without them, this Survey could not have been conducted in the short time allotted.

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