



1717 Massachusetts Avenue NW  
Fifth Floor  
Washington DC 20036  
(202) 328 3136  
fax (202) 939 3166  
email demos@ndi.org  
http://www.ndi.org

~~PARSONS~~  
PN-ACH-063  
10 026

**FINAL REPORT**  
**Lesotho Civil Military Study Mission to**  
**El Salvador and Costa Rica**  
**November 21 to 26, 1999**

**I SUMMARY**

Following the violence that erupted after Lesotho's May 1998 elections, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs has been working with the Interim Political Authority to provide a new electoral framework. NDI has also focused on developing ways to prevent future military intervention in the nation's politics. As part of this effort, NDI organized a delegation of top Lesotho leaders, including Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosili and Foreign Minister Thomas Thabane, traveled to Costa Rica and El Salvador for a week in November on a civil-military relations study mission. The delegation met with former Costa Rican president and Nobel prize winner Oscar Arias, El Salvadoran President Francisco Flores, and Costa Rican President Miguel Rodriguez. They also met with officials involved in the countries' peace and demobilization processes. Arias offered to become personally involved if Lesotho chose the Costa Rican model -- helping with among other things, raising funds internationally to pay for retraining of demobilized soldiers. This mission followed a July NDI-sponsored trip taken by Lesotho's principal secretary for the Ministry of Defense and one of her senior officers, and is part of a program to help Lesotho consider options for addressing its traditionally politicized military.

**II BACKGROUND**

In 1998, Lesotho conducted its second national election since moving to democratic rule in 1993. Despite notable development of an independent election commission, peaceful participation by a high percentage of voters, and near unanimous observer praise for the election, a pattern of post-election opposition-led unrest has severely challenged the country's democratic progress. The most recent post-election violence that culminated in an overturned coup attempt exposed lingering problems within Lesotho's military. As the country's political parties negotiate a new electoral model, the government has undertaken an effort to demobilize, depoliticize, and establish democratic civilian control of its armed forces.

NDI assisted this effort in July 1999 by bringing the new Principal Secretary of the Lesotho Ministry of Defence, Ms. Matsepo Ramakoae, and one of her senior officers, Major Maaparankoa Mahao, to two notable models in Central America, Costa Rica and El Salvador. In 1948, then



President Jose Figueres abolished Costa Rica's military, redirecting the country's resources toward social development. Today, Costa Rica is one of the world's most stable democracies and its people enjoy the highest standard of living and literacy rate in the region. Following more than a decade of brutal civil war that ended only recently in 1992, El Salvador has made tremendous progress demobilizing thousands of soldiers and reintegrating them into society and the economy. The military has also been reformed to a professional service securely under civilian control.

Ramakoae and Mahao held numerous high level meetings with officials and civil society leaders familiar with each country's experience. A highlight of the trip included an offer by Oscar Arias to become personally involved should Lesotho choose to demilitarize. Based on the recommendation of Principal Secretary Ramakoae, Prime Minister Mosisili requested further assistance from NDI to explore successful military reform options and follow-up on the offer of support by President Arias.

In November 1999, NDI conducted a similar study mission for Prime Minister Mosisili and Foreign Minister Thabane. The Government of Lesotho also sponsored the participation of Colonel Thuso Motanyane, Major Tsepo Mokuena, Chief of Protocol Teboho Kitleli, and Ministry of Defence Public Relations Officer Moliehi Khabele. The delegation met with the same experts and leaders from the July study mission, with notable additions of Costa Rican President Rodriguez and El Salvadoran President Flores (a detailed list of meetings is included). While the Costa Rican and El Salvadoran experts emphasized many of the same points and lessons shared with Principal Secretary Ramakoae, great attention was given to the Prime Minister's strong interest in effective demobilization programs.

## **El Salvador**

El Salvador was chosen for its remarkable democratic progress despite more than a decade of civil war that ended in 1992. More specifically, it has been able to peaceably demobilize large numbers of soldiers and guerillas and reintegrate them into the economy and society. Furthermore, El Salvador has reformed a military traditionally involved in politics into a redefined professional service securely under civilian control. That it has been able to do so during such a difficult era without the social instability inherent with large numbers of demobilized soldiers was of particular interest.

The delegation met with numerous top leaders in the government, military, and civil society, including among others, the vice minister of defense, the president of the congressional defense committee, and the undersecretary of defense. They also met with several retired officers that played key roles in negotiations that ended the civil war and in the ensuing demobilization programs. A number of these retired officers now work as NGO and political consultants in El Salvador's civil society.

Many of the delegation's questions focused on how demobilized soldiers were discouraged from joining those opposed to peace and instead successfully reintegrated into the economy and society. The El Salvadoran experts explained that the demobilization was one of the most difficult

and sensitive issues of the peace process. Many of the demobilized soldiers, for example, were from the rural areas and military service had, in some regards, offered a higher standard of living, making return to their former lifestyle unattractive. Therefore, it was important to convince the military leaders of the need for fundamental change -- a commitment that was more important than the speed of the process. Another key challenge was to identify needs, both of the reformed military and the demobilized soldiers, early in the process and provide specific skills and employment based on this assessment. El Salvador avoided a system that only offered financial demobilization programs, instead developing a comprehensive package and monitoring system that focused on education, social services, and employment assistance.

As with Principal Secretary Ramakoa's July visit, a notable meeting included Colonel Oscar Anaya who is the former Director of the School of Superior Strategic Studies (funded through the Defense Ministry). With the civil war ended, he started a program that brought together civilian and military leaders for a six-month course designed to promote greater understanding. Participants were carefully chosen to reflect leaders from various parts of civil society, including labor unions and the civil service (whose institutions committed to their participation in the program). Three mornings each week, the class would meet to discuss not only civil military issues, but general public policy concerns in El Salvador. Participants realized that they shared many of the same objectives, differing only at times on the means. Graduates of the course were provided with a certificate of completion and an effort is underway to provide graduate level academic credit. Colonel Anaya said with the upcoming graduation of the seventh class, the program had helped create an entirely new class in civil society that was well informed about public policy and defense issues and that had contributed to greater understanding between civilians and the military.

The following other points were echoed throughout the El Salvador visit:

- The demobilization process was seen as a long-term comprehensive effort to provide social and economic integration of the soldiers. Packages included different combinations of scholarships, land, and retirement benefits. *Personalized tracking of the soldiers through this process was critical.*
- Compliance to the peace treaty by all sides, including the decommissioning of arms, contributed significantly to the demobilization effort. Strong political will for the peace and military reform processes were similarly crucial.
- The demobilization process required a redefinition of the military's role in a democratic society. A new national consensus defined the military as a part of the state, not any political party, whose primary mission was to protect the nation from outside threats. It was important that the military not view the peace and demobilization processes as efforts to diminish its role.
- Police duties were for a national police force, not the military. Intelligence services were also removed from the military and placed under civilian control.

- Efforts were made to remove military promotions from political meddling and favoritism, instead basing them on education and skill performance
- Demobilization offered an opportunity to optimize limited resources. Similarly, strengthened congressional authority over the military budget has made the armed forces more financially responsible
- Reform in the armed forces required changes in mission, structure, legislation, and training that emphasized the military's new mission and democratic civilian leadership. These steps were eased by modernizing and improving education within the military
- International assistance contributed significantly in terms of resources, support, and motivation

These steps not only reformed the military into a professional nonpolitical institution, but helped it see itself as a permanent, legitimate, and respected part of society - something not enjoyed from the public before

### **Costa Rica**

Costa Rica offered another interesting model for Lesotho, one in which a nation had entirely done away with its military despite its location in an often unstable region. Following a 1948 civil war, Costa Rica became the first country to abolish the military. The move coincided with major investments in social and educational programs as well as the creation of an election tribunal. Money otherwise spent on the military was funneled into these programs. A 7,600 member national police service was given responsibility for law enforcement and border enforcement. Today, Costa Rica boasts one of the highest standards of living and largest middle classes in Central America. It has remained a peaceful democracy throughout the difficult civil wars in its immediate neighborhood. *Costa Ricans argue that their country's lack of a military offers a greater level of security due to its distinction in the international community*<sup>1</sup>

Costa Rica's police force, which is under the Security Ministry, is overwhelmingly comprised of public police officers. Approximately 4,500 officers work in the rural areas, another 1,500 conduct border patrol, and other smaller units focus on immigration, drug enforcement, and intelligence. Much attention has been paid to creating a professional service free from a history of political cronyism in which service and promotions are based solely on merit and education. Officers must attend a six-month training academy that includes training on, among other things, human rights, democratic government, and the role of a military versus a police force (one official explained the training to include "pride, limits, and the role"). Mid and high level officers are encouraged to visit

---

<sup>1</sup>It was consistently argued that potential aggressors take Costa Rica's non-military distinction very seriously. Ironically, without this distinction, it was further argued that war with Nicaragua would not have been avoided

other police forces in democracies outside Costa Rica *Interestingly, during elections, control of the police is temporarily ceded to the Electoral Commission to avoid political interference*

The delegation met with several high level government, public safety, and civil society representatives, including the vice minister of public security and interior, the president of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, and the minister of foreign affairs

At one meeting, President Rodriguez said Costa Rica's success started long ago when attention was paid to issues that produce, such health and education He also explained that attention has been given to a strong and independent judiciary with a guaranteed budget, and a progressive environmental conscience He said, "Costa Rica is small, but has the world's attention" as a result of these efforts Prime Minister Mosisili and President Rodriguez went on to discuss that in some countries militaries create more of an internal threat and that military service often removes those who serve from regular interaction in society This removal can result in an institution that in some cases can be more easily manipulated against society Rodriguez argued that anything that fosters such an isolated and cult-like structure is a threat to democracy Rodriguez praised Mosisili for being only the second African head of state to visit Costa Rica and offered his country's assistance to Lesotho

The meeting with Oscar Arias was particularly noteworthy Arias painted a bleak picture of Africa in which investments in the military, and too often wars, have come at the expense of investing in education, health, and social development (Lesotho's defense budget is second only to education) He said Africa was increasingly marginalized in the global economy and the international community "With the end of the cold war, we small countries must help ourselves," he stated He argued a great "need for a single country with vision and courage to take such a step [of abolishing the military] in Africa so that others might follow," singling out Lesotho as an ideal candidate Once Lesotho showed the political will to take this step, it would be viewed as "so unique, the rest of the world will look to you with admiration," and as a result, international support would emerge Arias said he would put his name and organization behind such an effort and help raise the necessary retraining funds and international attention

Arias also encourage the prime minister to rely more on regional bodies to offer security He argued that, "a lack of defense is the greatest defense," and that the resulting moral authority and a strong regional agreement will be more than adequate for Lesotho He continued that opposition parties should not see such a step as a threat, pointing out that Panama's disbanding of the military was supported by all political parties Furthermore, he responded to the delegation's concerns about employment for demobilized soldiers by pointing out ongoing cycles of employment/economic restructuring in all countries Arias concluded by saying, "the best way to consolidate democracy is to educate the public and human development is what really counts "

In a separate meeting, President Advisor Constantino Urcuyo and Foreign Minister Roberto Rojas similarly offered the Costa Rica government's assistance, should Lesotho wish to take these steps as the first African nation to demilitarize Other Costa Rican officials also encouraged Lesotho to follow a similar pattern of total demobilization and emphasized the following points as important to such a process

- Security is not only a military concept, but instead a comprehensive matter that includes political and economic variables. The absence of a military should not be seen as a loss of security, but instead as a redefinition of security.
- Lesotho would be uniquely suited to demilitarize as it faces no external enemies and its only neighbor, South Africa, has actually helped protect the country's democracy. It is also terribly poor and cannot afford to divert scant resources into a military.
- Not all political problems need to be solved before serious demobilization. Dissolving the military can actually strengthen a democratic transition and earn tremendous international support.
- A critical early step must include agreement among the country's political class to do away with the military – a step that requires political maturation as well. Such changes require national dialogue and political will.
- At the same time, the military must be willing to accept its diminished role in society. Chile and Argentina were cited as examples of militaries that eventually accepted nonpolitical roles in society.
- The larger national discussion of the military's role (or lack thereof) and what to do with demobilized soldiers must include the military. Furthermore, care must be taken in transferring military officers to the police, as many may not be suitable for such civilian service.
- A more gradual strategy that allows for these changes in political, military, and public sentiment might be most appropriate for Lesotho.
- A further step would be to establish treaties with neighbors as well as regional and international organizations – a step that Costa Rican officials said was of great importance.
- At the same time, the government must commit to regular investments in public education, health, employment, and civic education (for youth and adults). It was repeatedly stressed that the government must also continually invest in its democratic system, through education, institutional support, media development, and the support of basic freedoms.

### III CONCLUSION

In his closing conversations, Prime Minister Mosisili expressed great admiration for the maturity and sophistication of the two countries' leaders, both in the security services and in politics. He suggested on a number of occasions that representatives from Costa Rica and El Salvador visit Lesotho to help share their countries' models and political and security reforms, particularly broadening the discussion and understanding among the public, opposition, and elected officials. Mosisili also suggested to the El Salvadoran vice minister of security that a number of Basotho soldiers spend time training with the El Salvadoran Armed Forces. The attached opinion piece,

praising this sharing of models between nations, was published in the El Salvadoran newspaper *La Prensa Grafica* after the visit

Also shortly after the study mission, former president Oscar Arias sent a letter (copy attached) to Prime Minister Mosisili reiterating his personal interest in helping Lesotho with its reform efforts, particularly in making Lesotho the first African country to abolish the military as undertaken in Costa Rica. NDI expressed to Mosisili its interest in facilitating any such future visits and further study of these reform models

NDI has offered to help facilitate any future visits by Costa Rican and El Salvadoran representatives to continue and broaden the reform discussions in Lesotho. NDI will also implement a program in 2000 that trains political parties and domestic monitors in preparation for Lesotho's election anticipated later in the year



Meeting with former Costa Rican Minister of Public Security  
Laura Chinchilla



Delegation tours new Costa Rican police headquarters



Meeting with Costa Rican Presidential Advisor Constantino  
Urcuyo



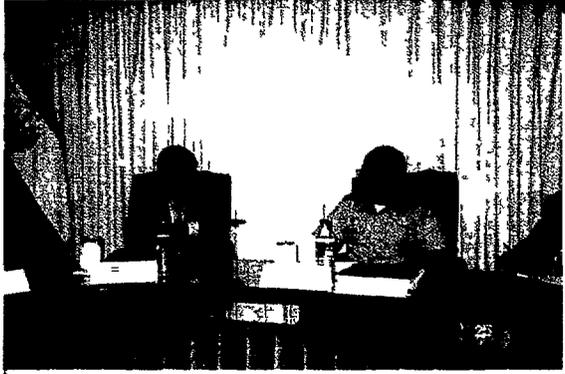
Meeting with Costa Rican President Miguel Rodriguez



Meeting with former Costa Rican President Oscar Arias



Lesotho delegation with Oscar Arias



Meeting with El Salvadoran Under Secretary of Defense General Alvaro Rivera Aleman



Meeting with El Salvadoran President Francisco Flores

FUNDACION ARIAS  
PARA LA PAZ  
Y EL  
PROGRESO HUMANO

San José, December 16, 1999

H E Pakalitha Mosisih  
Prime Minister  
Kingdom of Lesotho

Dear Prime Minister Mosisih

It was a great pleasure meeting with you during your recent visit to Costa Rica. Your willingness to travel all the way to Central America to learn from our humble experience is admirable and portrays you as a true democratic leader, genuinely committed to the well being of your country and of your people. Indeed, the tasks that lie ahead of you are difficult, but they are necessary in the process of building a democratic state.

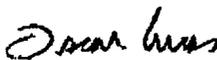
In this regard, the possibility of abolishing the armed forces in Lesotho can be an effective step in consolidating democracy and liberating resources for investment in human security. It can also contribute greatly towards the development of a new security paradigm in which countries voluntarily renounce to the use of force to conduct their international relations. By adopting this model, small and poor countries like Lesotho, Costa Rica and Panama can achieve a moral stature that surpasses their economic might, and set an example that other countries may eventually follow. While at present it seems that the full demilitarization model is a luxury that only few countries can afford, Lesotho is one that is uniquely positioned to do so.

Clearly, public and opposition party education as well as the support of the international community, are important in taking this vital step. As you well know, should your government decide to dissolve the armed forces, a program to successfully reintegrate former soldiers into civilian life should be developed. Furthermore, great efforts should be made to develop a well-trained and effective police force. Nevertheless, the prospects of freeing resources for education and the well being of the people in Lesotho should be sufficient incentive for the donor community to support this brave and innovative approach.

I wish to reiterate my offer to assist the people of Lesotho in the demilitarization process by trying to muster support from the international donor community. It will be my great honor to be able to contribute to this historical step, which bears such great potential for positive change, not only for the Kingdom of Lesotho and the Southern African region, but also for the rest of the world.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish you and your close ones a happy holiday season, and a peaceful and prosperous New Year.

Sincerely yours,

  
Oscar Arias

## PENSANDO EN VOZ ALTA

## ¡Somos un buen ejemplo!



**Ricardo Córdova  
Macías**  
Columnista de  
LA PRENSA GRÁFICA

Los salvadoreños somos muy duros y exigentes con nosotros mismos, a tal punto que al comentar el tema de los Acuerdos de Paz, en varias oportunidades he podido constatar que no podemos reconocer lo mucho que hemos logrado en tan poco tiempo. Hay compatriotas que únicamente señalan lo negativo, sin valorar todas las cosas positivas que hemos alcanzado. No se trata de ser autocomplacientes con nosotros mismos, pero sí de saber reconocer lo que nuestro país ha avanzado desde que terminamos el conflicto armado.

En esta ocasión quiero compartir con mis lectores una experiencia personal derivada de la oportunidad que tuve de colaborar con el Instituto Nacio-

nal Demócrata (NDI) de los Estados Unidos, en la preparación de una visita del Primer Ministro de Lesotho a nuestro país.

En julio de este año, la ministra de Defensa de Lesotho, Ms Matsepo Ramakoe y uno de sus oficiales con mayor antigüedad, Major Mahao visitaron El Salvador, para conocer nuestra experiencia en la reforma del ejército para reducirlo en tamaño, cambiar su doctrina y convertirlo en una institución profesional y apolítica, subordinada al gobierno civil democráticamente elegido. Además, tenían interés en el proceso de desarmovización de los ex guerrilleros y ex soldados y su reinserción en la vida civil.

A su regreso le presentaron un informe al primer ministro, Sr Pakalitha Mosisili, quien se mostró interesado en los hallazgos y decidió organizar una nueva visita, solamente que en esta oportunidad él mismo presidiría la delegación, que además estuvo conformada por el canciller Thomas Thabane, dos oficiales del ejército, el jefe del protocolo y un oficial de relaciones públicas. La delegación fue acompañada por el señor Chris Homan, oficial de progra-

mas del Instituto Nacional Demócrata, quien es responsable de la cooperación con Lesotho.

La delegación presidida por el Primer Ministro visitó nuestro país los días 24 al 26 de noviembre, y tuvo la oportunidad de reunirse con actores claves en el proceso de reforma militar. Además, se entrevistaron con el Presidente de la Comisión de Defensa de la Asamblea Legislativa, y con el Viceministro de Defensa.

Esta no era una visita oficial de Jefe de Estado, razón por la cual al inicio se complicaron los preparativos. Sin embargo, gracias al apoyo de Luis Aparicio de nuestra embajada en Washington, y a la buena disposición del personal de Cancillería, se lograron afinar los preparativos de la visita. Un reconocimiento merece el personal de seguridad que proporcionó Casa Presidencial, por su profesionalismo.

Como corolario a la visita, y en el marco de la parte protocolar de una visita no oficial, el Primer Ministro tuvo la oportunidad de reunirse con el Presidente Flores, y el canciller Thabane conversó con nuestra canciller.

En la cena antes del viaje de regreso de nuestros distinguidos visitantes, pude observar que el Primer Ministro de Lesotho iba impresionado por lo mucho que hemos logrado en el campo de nuestra reforma militar, del nivel intelectual de las personas con que se habían reunido, y por la subordinación de nuestra fuerza armada al poder civil.

Desde luego que no existen modelos, y lo que se han llevado son lecciones de nuestra experiencia, que quizás puedan servirles de referencia al momento de formular una política de reforma militar que les permita la reducción, profesionalización y subordinación de su ejército al poder civil. Por de pronto, es importante insistir en que ¡somos un buen ejemplo! para la comunidad internacional, y que ojalá en el futuro nos sigan visitando delegaciones de otros países que quieran conocer de primera mano nuestra experiencia histórica.

---

**Por de pronto, es importante insistir en que ¡somos un buen ejemplo! para la comunidad internacional, y que ojalá en el futuro nos sigan visitando delegaciones de otros países que quieran conocer de primera mano nuestra experiencia histórica.**

---

Ricardo Cordova Macias  
Columnist, *La Prensa Grafica*

### **Thinking out loud We are a good example**

We Salvadoreans are very hard on and demanding of ourselves, to the point that when one comments on the Peace Accords, I have often had to answer that we are unable to recognize all the successes we have had in such a short time. There are fellow countrymen who only point out the negative, without mentioning all of the positive things that we have achieved. This is not to try to brag about ourselves, but for us to know how to recognize what our country has achieved since we ended the armed conflict.

In this occasion, I wish to share with my readers a personal experience derived from the opportunity that I had to collaborate with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) of the United States, in the preparation of a visit of the Prime Minister of Lesotho to our country.

In July of this year, the Minister of Defense of Lesotho, Ms. Matsepo Ramakoae, and one of her senior officials, Major Mahao, visited El Salvador to learn about our experience in reforming the military, especially reducing its size, changing its doctrine and converting it into a professional and apolitical institution, subordinate to the civil, democratically elected government. Additionally, they were interested in the process of demobilization of the ex-guerrillas and ex-soldiers and their re-entry into civilian life.

Upon returning, the delegation presented a report to the Prime Minister, Mr. Pakalitha Mosisili, who showed interest in their findings and decided to organize a new visit, only this time he would like to preside over the delegation himself, which ended up including the Chancellor Thomas Thabane, two military officials, the Chief of Protocol, and a public relations official. The delegation was accompanied by Chris Homan, program officer of the National Democratic Institute, who is responsible for the cooperation with Lesotho.

The delegation headed by the Prime Minister visited our country November 24-26 and had the opportunity to meet with the key players in the military reform process. As well, they met with the President of the Commission of Defense in the Legislative Assembly and with the Vice Minister of Defense.

This was not an official visit of a head of state, which led to some complications in the preparations for it. Nonetheless, thanks to the support of Luis Aparicio of our embassy in Washington and to helpful people of the chancellery, it was possible to work out the details of the visit. An acknowledgment is also deserved by the security personnel of the Presidential House for their professionalism.

As a corollary to the visit and atypical of an unofficial visit protocol, the Prime Minister had the opportunity to meet with President Flores and the Chancellor Thabane spoke with our chancellor.

At a dinner before our distinguished guests' trip back, I could observe that the Prime Minister

of Lesotho was going away impressed by how much we had accomplished in our military reform, by the intellectual level of the people he had met with, and by the subordination of the armed forces to the civilian power

Of course there are no models and what our visitors take back with them are lessons of our experiences, but perhaps we can serve them as a reference at the moment they formulate a policy towards military reform that permits them the reduction, professionalization, and subordination of their military to a civilian power. For the immediate, it is important to insist that we are a good example for the international community and hopefully in the future international delegations will continue to visit us wanting to learn first hand about our historical experience