

TRAFFIC SURVEY OF
TEGUCIGALPA AND COMAYAGUELA, HONDURAS

November 1969 - February 1970

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I. INTRODUCTION - Purpose of Study

A. Terms of Reference. This project was initiated and performed pursuant to the US A.I.D. request contained in Tegucigalpa cable 4672 dated 24 October 1969. Its overall objective was to assist the local enforcement agency in providing more efficient and modern control and administration of vehicular traffic.

The scope of this project was to conduct the necessary studies and to make recommendations for the following purposes:

1. To provide for smooth traffic flow in and out of the Capital city on the available routes, through the proper use of traffic officers and mechanical control devices.

2. To improve the Traffic Command's operations and administration.

3. To initiate a traffic records system which will include uniform reports, uniform citations with records of their dispositions, and a follow-up accident investigation file.

4. To form a statistical records system to be used as a preventative and not punitive measure in determining future personnel and equipment needs.

5. To establish a joint traffic control-complaint center to supervise the traffic patrol cars and personnel and to receive accident reports not prepared in the field.

B. General Local Setting and Situation. The Honduran Capital, Tegucigalpa, joins the neighboring community of Comayaguela to form a twin-city complex called the "Francisco Morazan District." Within this area live an estimated 407 thousand people.^{1/}

The 1968 records show an estimated 16 thousand motor vehicles in the same area, with a yearly increase averaging 10% during the period from 1963 to 1968.^{2/}

If the registrations increase by this same percent for the next five years, 26 thousand cars can be expected in the twin-city area. There is no doubt that, with the congestion being experienced today, the traffic problem five years hence will become unbearable - unless plans are made now for the anticipated increase.

^{1/} Source: "Compendio Estadístico de Honduras, 1967-1968." The population for Honduras is estimated at 2,494,900 and for the "Francisco Morazan District," 406,800

^{2/} Source: "Informe Anual de la Comandancia General de Tránsito, 1968." Estimated motor vehicle registration in Honduras shows a total of 24,688 in the Republic and 16,339 in the District.

II. CONCLUSIONS

A. The District and Downtown Traffic. The traffic in the District and particularly in Tegucigalpa suffers severely from congestion caused by the lack of downtown parking facilities and effective traffic control.

The vehicular movement flows heavily from one city to the other and during some hours becomes extremely uni-directional. A great majority of the people reside in Comayaguela and work in Tegucigalpa, creating the expected commuter traffic congestion, before and after work and lunch hours. The municipal and nearly all the federal offices, along with the numerous commercial establishments, that are regularly visited by the citizens are located in Tegucigalpa. Seven hundred-plus public buses travel virtually the same route, all providing inter-city service, all meeting at the public market and all using the same two principal streets in Tegucigalpa (Second and Third Avenues)^{3/}.

The traffic situation is further complicated by the San Jose River which separates the two cities but all of the buses and, by habit, most motorists only use one of the five available bridges, the Carias Bridge.

In downtown Tegucigalpa the movement is further hampered by the street construction and layout. The roads are typical of the days of the oxen carts and have not been changed since. They are narrow, measuring 10-15 feet wide. The surfaces on some streets are not paved. Others that are paved are in poor condition. The variable sizes of the city blocks, which may range from 50 to approximately 300 feet long, prevent the proper synchronization of traffic signals, hence adding to rather than alleviating the congestion.

In the downtown area the parking problem contributes to the impediment of traffic flow. The on-street parking is not time-limited. Office buildings do not have indoor facilities and the very few lots available provide for scarce off-street parking.

The traffic point-control officer is simply not performing his assigned duties. He is usually not at the intersection where he should be, but may be found standing in doorways or along the sides of buildings. Even if the intersection becomes congested, the officer remains out of sight, allowing the situation to clear itself. Secondly, there is no field supervision of the traffic officers; it is nonexistent.

B. Traffic Headquarters Building. The Traffic Command for the Francisco Morazan District is located near central downtown Tegucigalpa along one of the main arteries. It is housed in a former one-story residence sub-divided into ten offices. The following were noted of the headquarter facilities and operations.

^{3/} See Appendix #1: Map of the Twin-City Area, Tegucigalpa and Comayaguela.

The building is not marked on the outside to identify the organization. Nor are the offices marked to assist the visitors.

It is not uncommon to find a line of 15 or more people waiting to see the Commander. His secretaries make no attempt to screen the visitors and to re-direct them to the proper offices.

Persons who have business in this building and the police officials themselves are forced to leave their vehicles in the street, thus contributing to the traffic congestion. Moreover, without indoor parking the patrol cars and motorcycles are unprotected and subject to terrorist acts as well as the deteriorating effects of the weather.

Of another concern in security vulnerability is the free access the public has through the side entrance of the building. Although a guard is stationed at this post, he is usually found deep inside the hallway, leaving the area without effective control.

Every office lacks the full array of furnishings. For instance, some have only enough chairs for the employees, but none for the waiting visitors. What furniture they do have is in need of repairs and repainting. The illumination is extremely poor.

Finally, although the Commander's office is adequately furnished, he has no inter-office communication system. He must send his assistant to relay any messages or use the telephone.

C. Driver's Licensing. The procedure of issuing driver's licenses leaves a great deal to be desired. The procedure is not given in writing, but rather verbally. This means that unless the applicant takes written notes, he may be required to return to the office several times.

The traffic rules and regulations are not available in writing. Hence, the Traffic Department provides the applicant with no booklet from which he could study for the test.

The applicant must pay the tax collector a fee for permission to take the driver's test. The same fee is paid each time the test is taken.

The applicant must put in writing on a prestamped official stationery a request to obtain a driver's license. Application forms are not used.

He must also purchase another prestamped official stationery for the medical examination. The doctor is required to attest that the applicant has no communicable disease and is medically qualified for a driver's license. The medical examination and report do not indicate whether the applicant is physically qualified to drive a motor vehicle.

Finally, the Honduran traffic regulations do not have physical requirements, such as, 20/20 vision, normal depth perception, visual acuity, color perception, reaction time, reflexes, eyesight recovery from

sunlight or headlight glare and in addition, the regulation does not require the driver to possess normal hearing nor does it require notation of any physical deformity that might interfere with driving ability.

D. Traffic Violation Administrative Section. This important section is charged principally with the processing of traffic violations and of minor traffic accidents.

This process calls for a 5" x 8" information card to be filled out at the time the application of a driver's license is submitted. After the license is issued, the same card is forwarded to the administrative records office and filed alphabetically. Thereafter, each traffic violation issued against this person is noted on the information card. When he has a record of three serious violations with convictions, the driver's license is subject to suspension for a three-month period (The National Traffic Regulation impowers the traffic judge of this section with the authority to make such a suspension).

When operating with a full staff, this section is a tremendous asset to the Traffic Command. However, due to a lack of personnel impairing its ability to maintain the file up to date, the traffic judge is not able to fully utilize the records. Incidents were related during this study indicating that, for the lack of up to date information, a number of motorists should have been subjected to administrative action, but did not.

E. Vehicle Registration. In accordance with the present National Traffic Regulation, citizens living in the Francisco Morazan District are required to register their motor vehicles with the Traffic Command, plus pay a fee to the National Tax Collector's Office.

As simple as this might seem, the actual vehicle registration is often complicated and time-consuming. Up to five different fees must be paid to various agencies; the entire process may take up to three full days. However, to simplify this, the owner may employ the assistance of a "Tramitador," a person who for a fee (which can be quite exorbitant) will register the vehicle.

While the principal fee is paid to the National Tax Collector's Office, another payment is required to be made with the Municipal Tax Collector. It is interesting to note that, before this can be done, the owner must have certification that his municipal property taxes have been paid in full.

The principal registration agency is the National Tax Collector. All vehicle registration records are kept at this office and filed by vehicle serial numbers, by names of the owners and by license plate numbers.

The role of the Traffic Command in the registration process is to carry out the required vehicle inspections and to handle the posting of

bonds which the owners must do to ensure payment of any liability. Nevertheless, this office does maintain a logbook in which vehicle registration information is recorded and listed by the numerical order of license plate numbers.

From the investigative standpoint, a shortcoming arises in the present records system. The information at the National Tax Collector's Office is readily available to the police or any interested agency only during working hours. If a fatal hit-run accident occurs after working hours and only the car's description is obtained, the investigation must wait until the following day to check the files of the Collector's Office. If a stolen vehicle is recovered without license plates, a record check of serial numbers cannot be immediately made.

F. Traffic Operations. A total of 120 men are assigned to the Traffic Command. Of these, there are two platoons of 38 men each, to provide 24-hour coverage at approximately 38 intersections in the Francisco Morazan District.

An additional 10 men are assigned to the accident investigation section, but can, if needed, be called upon to work 7 or 8 intersections not covered by the above platoons.

The remainder of the staff includes the officer-of-the-day, men to guard the traffic headquarters building and other fixed posts, chauffeurs, motorcyclists, orderlies and janitors.

Interestingly enough, only 8 of the 120 men are licensed to drive a police vehicle. Consequently, unless one of the licensed officers is present, all vehicles remain idle.

The motor vehicles assigned to the traffic patrol include two 1968 Ford Falcon sedans (radio-equipped, with 2-head rotating beacon red light and siren), used only on an on-call basis, plus three 1967 Honda motorcycles, none equipped with radio. Two 1968 Toyota Jeeps are also assigned to this office; one for the Commander's use and radio-equipped, the other for messenger purposes.

The base communication station is the traffic dispatch office. Its equipment consists of an FM-5B Battery-AC radio, to which is attached a trickle charger.

Only two commissioned officers are assigned to the Traffic Command, the Commander and an officer in charge of licensing. As a consequence, all documents are signed by the Commander, a situation which partly explains the continually long line of people waiting to see him.

G. Traffic Personnel and Organization. Personnel management and department organization contribute greatly to the welfare and morale

of the employees and indirectly to the overall efficient operation of the agency itself.

The Traffic Command finds itself with a number of problems in these areas. Although their organizational chart appears to clearly separate the duties^{4/}, the operations in actual practice are confusing and are not functionally divided.

Terminology, as employed in the organizational chart, is strictly military. The National Police should establish itself as a separate entity, by using appropriate police terminology.

A factor affecting the morale of the policemen is their low salary. The 1968 CES Annual Report shows the base pay of a policeman to be US \$50 (L 100.00) per month, while municipal employees, such as a street sweeper, who have considerably less responsibilities earn US \$45.00 (L 90.00). For any special assignments the officer may be held over from his regular duty hours, requiring overtime but receiving no compensation.

The police uniform adversely affects the officer's morale. The quality of the clothing is in itself depressing. In addition, the colors blend into the darkness and are not easily visible to the motorists.

The 76 men assigned to the two traffic platoons work six hours on and six hours off, seven days a week. This creates problems, in that the men sometimes attend to their personal problems while on duty. Furthermore, it does not allow them time for their family and social life, adding to the low morale.

All fixed post and point control policemen must make roll call and report to the CES Headquarters, before and after their tour of duty. This situation arose because the Traffic Command Headquarters does not have adequate facilities to handle these functions. Consequently, a traffic patrolman rarely sees his superior officer (and receives no supervision), unless he takes a violator to the Traffic Command.

Other problems which face the patrolman are the absence of a pension system which discourages the officer from making this work his career.

H. Traffic Training. Many of the traffic officers are graduates of the police recruit training school at "Ojo de Agua" and are generally recognized by their exemplary demeanor, tact and personality.

^{4/} See Appendix #2: Traffic Command organizational chart from the 1968 CES Annual Report.

After graduation from the Police Recruit Training some of the officers are required to attend short courses in human relations, public relations, first aid and in other subjects unrelated to traffic operations.

They receive no on-the-job training nor formal instruction in the performance of their duties as traffic control officers. The patrolman is assigned to the intersection without knowing what to do.

I. Public Transportation. The Traffic Command, which is charged with the records of all public conveyances in the Francisco Morazan District, maintains separate files on taxis, urban buses, national and international buses.

Although traffic regulations spell out the requirements and controls over all motor vehicles, there is the lack of enforcement and the drivers literally do as they please. The taxis and buses stop in any lane of traffic and are often reluctant to load and unload passengers at their specified spots. All of these violations considerably add to the overall traffic congestion.

The number of conveyances also present a problem. If the present increase in vehicles is not reduced or corrective engineering implemented, the future traffic congestion will be beyond control. In addition to the passenger cars, there was an increase of 71 urban buses over the 1167 in service in 1968. The 1968 CES Annual Report also shows that there is a total of 5641 taxis in the Capital District, or about 20% of the total number of vehicles in the Capital District.

J. National Traffic Engineer's Office. Unfortunately, a traffic engineer's office does not exist in Honduras. The Director of Planning and Urbanization, under the Ministry of Public Works, has been performing this job as time permits.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. The District and Downtown Traffic

1. An official request at the Ministerial level should be submitted to the National Executive suggesting that the various Federal and Municipal government agencies stagger their work hours, based on the locations of the office buildings.

Plans should be made to relocate these government buildings in future construction, to alleviate the commuter congestion in downtown Tegucigalpa.

2. The Municipal Planning Office should exercise their authority by insisting that every new downtown building include sufficient off-street parking to accommodate all the employees or tenants.

Moreover, plans for any future road construction should include the right to widen the streets at a later date.

3. An "Origin and Destination" traffic survey of the Francisco Morazan District bus routes should be conducted as soon as possible by competent technicians. One of the main purposes should be to redesignate the public transportation routes and utilize all bridges, not merely the Carias Bridge. Another objective should be the re-routing of some buses to include thickly populated areas that do not have means of public transportation.

B. Traffic Headquarters Building

1. Emphasis must be placed on the need to move the Traffic Command to another site, where better service to the public can be given, where there will be adequate off-street parking for the visitors, and where the building and police vehicles can be better protected.

2. Prior to moving into new quarters, however, a study should be conducted to determine the frequency and types of contacts being made by the visitors with the Traffic Command. With this collected data, the offices and their functions can be assigned to provide better accessibility and convenience to the public.

3. The new site should also include an enclosed area to permit minor vehicle servicing, maintenance and in cases of emergency, to serve as protection for the official vehicles.

4. In conjunction with this move, it is strongly recommended that the shift hours be adjusted to eliminate any need for mess hall and dormitory facilities.

5. The Headquarters Building should have the necessary signs on its exterior to identify the organization and inside, to identify the offices and services. A directory should be placed in the building to show the locations of the offices. The Headquarters should be furnished with the basic office equipment and supplies.

C. Driver's Licensing

1. It is urgently recommended that the application for a driver's license be accomplished with the use of one printed form with the appropriate number of carbon inserts. This form should include the applicant's personal data, plus the medical examination results with a statement as to the applicant's qualification to operate a motor vehicle. This procedure would only require one official document, rather than two and would eliminate the numerous attachments found on today's application.

2. A meeting with the National Medical College is recommended to adopt those physical requirements normally needed to operate a motor vehicle.

3. It is also recommended that periodic road blocks be set up at unannounced locations to check licenses. This would identify

the unlicensed operators, as well as encourage others to keep them up to date. Moreover, these spot checks can ensure that the driver is operating a vehicle, within the restrictions specified on his license.

4. Printed handouts for the applicants are highly recommended. These handbooks would contain instructions and requirements to obtain a driver's license. In the same (or different) booklet the local motor vehicle laws and driving instructions can be stated and illustrated to assist the applicant in preparing for the examination.

D. Traffic Violation Administrative Section

In a previous section of this report it was pointed out that the system of recording traffic violations on each driver's personal data card was a most effective measure and an asset to the Traffic Command. But, for the lack of personnel, the files could not be kept up to date.

It is therefore highly recommended that sufficient personnel be assigned to this section to provide a full staff.

E. Vehicle Registration

1. It is recommended that a joint meeting be arranged with the Traffic Division, the National Controller, the National and Municipal Tax Collectors, or their representatives, to discuss the registration process and possible ways in which it can be improved.

2. It is also recommended that the National Tax Collector supply the Traffic Command with a copy of the complete master registration file of vehicles, by their descriptions, serial numbers and the owner's name; that this information be retained by the police radio dispatch office.

F. Traffic Operations

It is recommended:

1. That traffic cars patrol the city on a 24-hour basis and motorcycles on 6 a.m. - 2 p.m. and 2 p.m. - 10 p.m. shifts.

2. That the use of spot maps to show the locations, types and time of all traffic accidents be initiated.

3. That the Traffic Command initiate an eight-hour shift, six-day work week for all traffic personnel, allowing a full-day off.

4. That the point-control policemen manually operate the traffic signals during the peak traffic periods, including lunchtime.

5. That the Traffic Commander initiate a work schedule for the operation of his office, specifying a time for interviews, signing papers and for planning and field supervision.

G. Traffic Personnel and Organization

1. To provide for clearer terminology and chain of command, it is recommended that the Traffic Command be reorganized as shown in the attached organization chart^{5/}.

2. A salary survey is recommended to favorably compare the wages of the police with other government employees of equal responsibilities. To alleviate any sudden strain on the budget but yet to initiate immediate improvement of the policemen's morale a gradual step increase is suggested starting from the present level and periodically rising to the future level.

3. A job description should be prepared for all administrative employees of the Traffic Command.

4. The uniform for the traffic police should be modified to make this Division distinct from the others and more visible. It is suggested that traffic police change to white shirt and cap with black tie.

5. It is also recommended that consideration for promotion be given to those men who make the highest grad in the final examinations in the Traffic Supervisory Courses.

6. All traffic police assigned to fixed-posts and point-controls should attend roll call at the Traffic Command Headquarters for briefing prior to reporting to their respective stations. This will permit inspection of uniforms, sidearms and traffic ticket books, as well as provide opportunity to accomplish special details and in-service training. In conjunction with this, daily activity logs by the policemen should be submitted for approval of the supervisor. The log should indicate each individual's activity on an hour-by-hour basis during his tour of duty. This would provide information as to the nature of activities and also supply statistical data for future study and analysis.

H. Traffic Training

1. It is recommended that Traffic Supervisory Courses be initiated to include both practical police and traffic subjects, the latter should include traffic patrol, traffic regulations, point-control, accident investigation and preparation of detailed accident drawings; that each course have a duration of 167 1/2 hours in four weeks; that each policeman assigned to the traffic unit, regardless of his rank, be required to attend one of these courses, but in the interim be provided with a short in-service traffic training course.

^{5/} See Appendix #3: Recommended organization chart of the Traffic Command.

2. An on-the-job training program should be provided by US A.I.D. for at least one technician in the traffic engineering field.

The scope of this program should cover the following: One month with the traffic engineer's office for familiarization with the different operations; one month practical study of procedures and techniques in performing manual traffic counts, traffic flow studies, in the analysis and conclusions made from the collected data; one month in the traffic flow pattern analysis employing and adjusting electronic control devices; another month or more of study with the traffic engineer's maintenance shop, the manufacture of traffic signals, signs, etc. and, if time permits, short observation/study tours to small city traffic engineering project.

I. Public Transportation

In conjunction with the recommended "Origina and Destination" survey, a program should be developed to determine exactly how many buses and taxis are actually required to service the Francisco Morazan District and to adjust the issuance of bus and taxi permits accordingly.

J. National Traffic Engineer's Office

It is recommended that a National Traffic Engineer's Office be established under the Ministry of Public Works. The Planning and Urbanization Department within this Ministry has technicians that are qualified and can assist the new traffic engineer. Office space is readily available in the Public Works building, offering the additional advantage of centralizing all the engineers with this Ministry.

K. A Uniform Traffic Code

1. It is recommended that a committee of attorneys preferably the National Association of Lawyers be named to coordinate with the CES and compile a modern vehicle code to replace the present outdated one. This new code should include both traffic laws and regulations.

2. The fines levied in the current 12 year old vehicle code are relatively minimal and pose no consequence. The fines should be revised.

3. It is also recommended that a section of this vehicle code cover overweight and oversized commercial vehicles. The damage to the highways, plus the danger these heavy vehicles are to the motorists, make it imperative that this new code adopt some weight limitations on them.

L. A Highway Patrol Operation

Initiation of the Honduran Highway Patrol is scheduled for the middle of June 1970 or in July. In consideration, the following is recommended:

1. That a careful selection be made of the personnel that will be assigned to this operation; that participants from the first Traffic Supervisory Course be screened to form a nucleus in this unit; that as many traffic sergeants as can be spared be among the selected.

2. That a daily in service roll call training program begin as soon as possible and include the following subjects: traffic patrol, accident investigations, report writing, first aid, communications, approaching traffic violators, the search of persons and vehicles, personal defense, use of handcuffs, public and human relations, preservation of physical evidence and defensive driving.

3. That the work schedule for the Highway Patrol be an 8-hour shift, 3 shifts per day, seven days a week; however, each patrolman work only six days and be off one day per week.

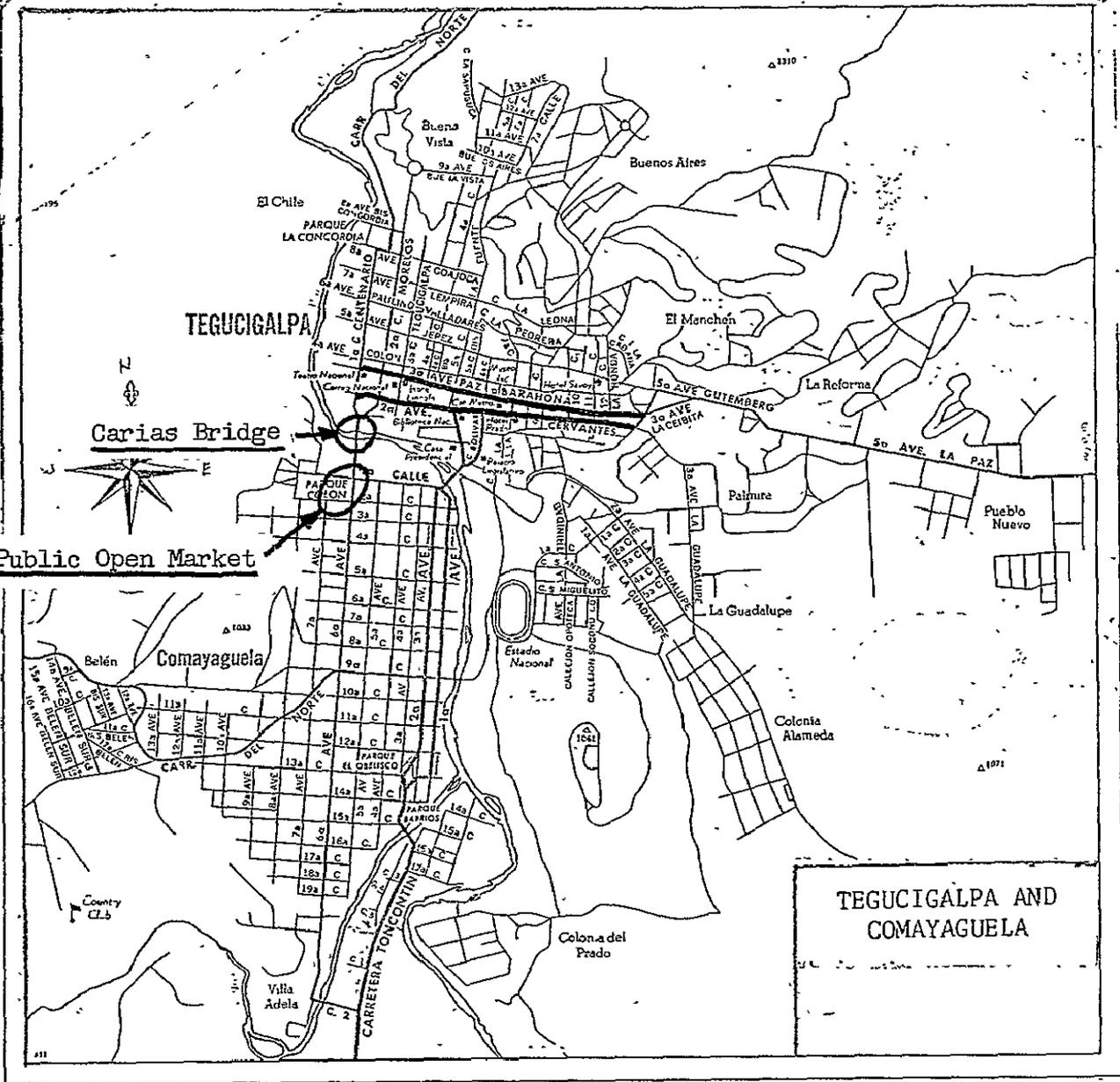
4. That each patrol unit not-be assigned to more than 55 kms nor less than 40 kms of highways.

5. That all patrol vehicles be given complete servicing at least once a week; that this service be performed at each of the highway patrol sector offices, so as not to force the vehicles to be returned to CES for every shift relief and service.

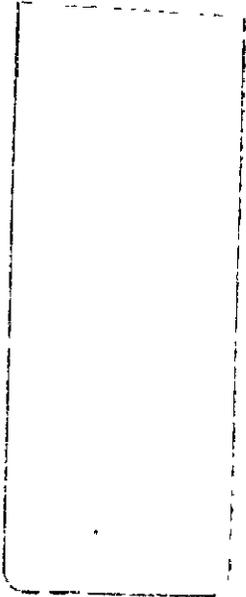
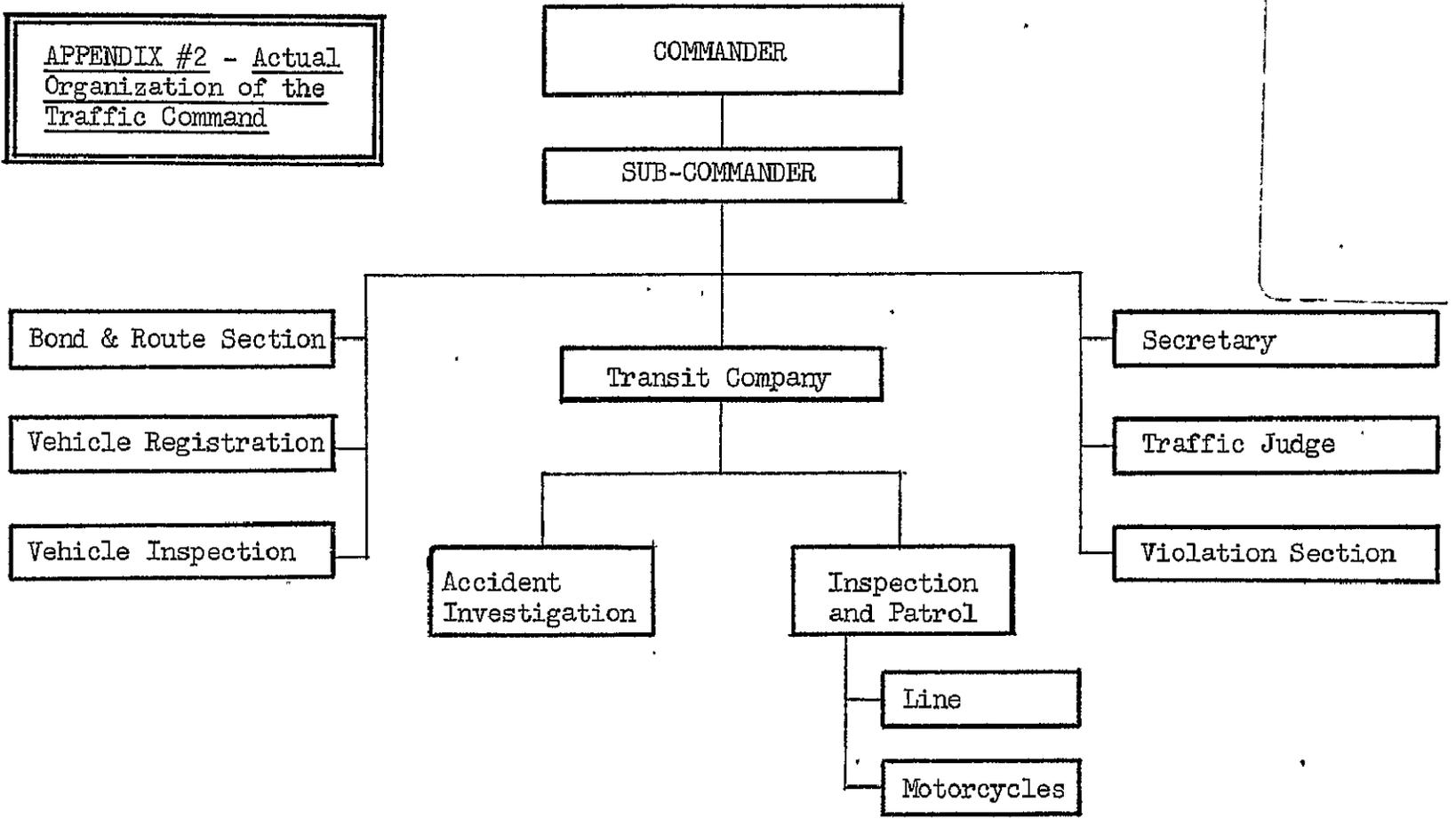
6. That sector maps be drawn up and provided each patrol unit, in order that each officer will know his boundaries and also know the CES territorial jurisdiction.

7. That an educational publicity campaign be initiated 15 days before and continue for 15 days after the inauguration of the Highway Patrol; and that during this period "courtesy" tickets be issued for minor violations, and regular tickets continue to be issued for the more serious violations.

APPENDIX #1 - Map of Tegucigalpa-Comayaguela Area



APPENDIX #2 - Actual
Organization of the
Traffic Command



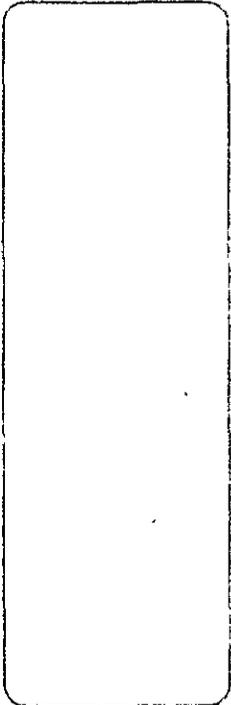
APPENDIX #3 - Proposed Organization of the CES Traffic Command

Minister of Defense and Public Safety

CES Director General

TRAFFIC COMMANDER

SUB-COMMANDER



UNIFORMED DIVISION

TRANSPORT DIVISION

ADMINISTRATION DIV

Officer of Day

Communications

Traffic Section

Radio Patrol

Accident Invest

Motor Patrol

Fixed-Posts

Foot Patrol

Point Controls

Motorcycles

Veh. Registratn

Veh. Inspection

Licenses

Routes

Personnel

Logistics

Violations

Bonds

Pub. Relations