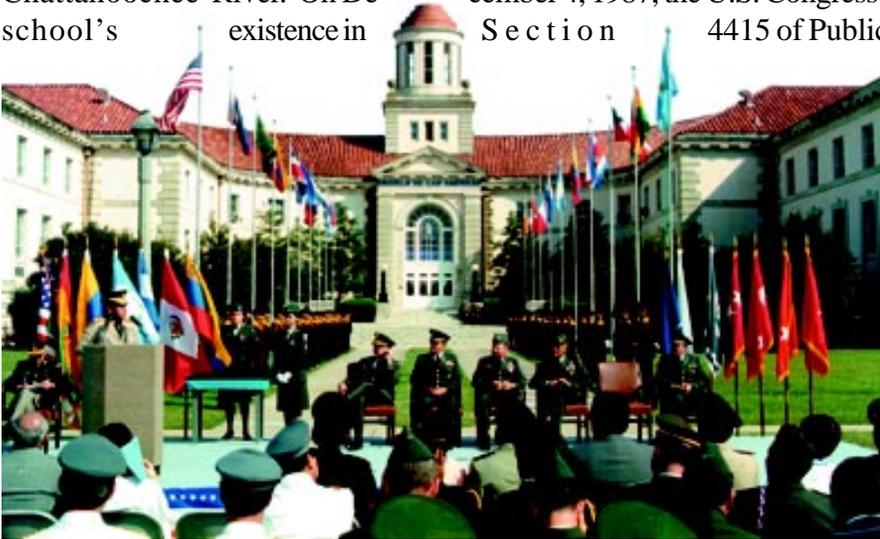


## *Reconsolidation in the United States (1984-1990):*

Fort Benning, Columbus, Georgia, and Phenix City, Alabama all received USARSA with open arms even though the military post was not the school's official home at the time. Fort Benning competed with Fort Stewart, Georgia and Fort Polk, Louisiana as possible homes for USARSA.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, Fort Benning won the competition, and on November 25, 1986, the Secretary of the Army, John O. Marsh, Jr., gave USARSA a new permanent home near the banks of the Chattahoochee River. On December 4, 1987, the U.S. Congress validated USARSA's mission by codifying the school's existence in Section 4415 of Public Law 100-180.



*A military ceremony honoring the soldiers and civilians of USARSA.*

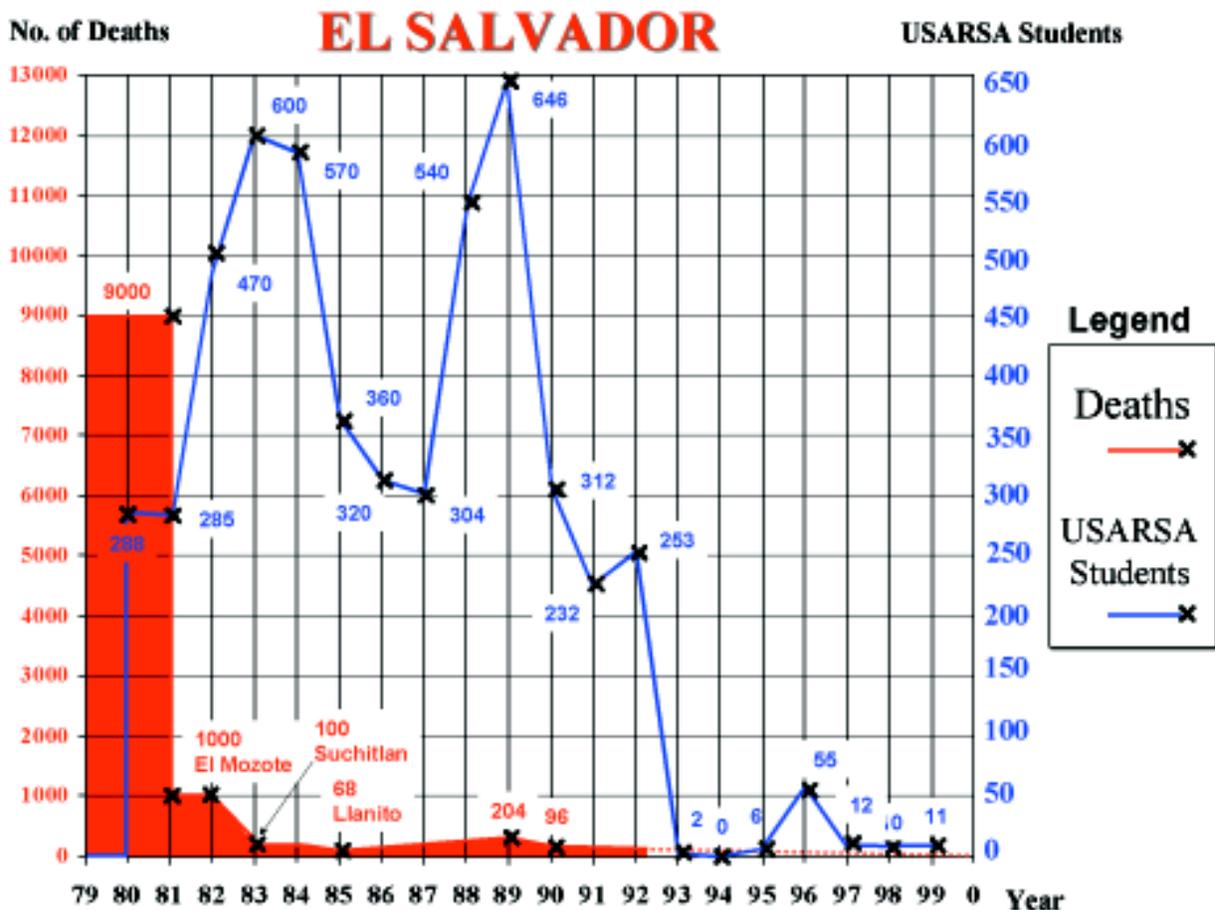
In order to turn back the recent successes of El Salvador's Marxist revolutionaries, the Infantry School at Fort Benning had been training large groups of Salvadoran soldiers under a 1981 Joint Chiefs' of Staff two-phase plan to rapidly develop officer leadership in the El Salvadoran Armed Forces.<sup>40</sup> Phase I consisted of unit-level training in small arms, communications, intelligence, leadership, urban warfare, land navigation, airmobile operations, artillery and mortar fire, first aid, squad-level live fires, patrolling, and field-training exercises. The Infantry Center, rather than USARSA, was chosen to execute Phase I because of its established training capabilities and location outside the Republic of Panama. The tense political climate surrounding USARSA's future and an anti-U.S. movement in Panama created a reluctance to have large numbers of Central Americans training under the U.S. flag within Panama's borders. Additionally, the U.S. wanted to internationalize Phase I training with support from both Colombia and Venezuela in order to increase the potential number of officers who could be trained.<sup>41</sup>



*Training El Salvadoran soldiers.*

Phase II was designed to capitalize on USARSA's previous training of Salvadorans in Panama and utilize the school's unique position as a "hemispheric-oriented regional training center for Latin America" by "providing long-term selected individual, small-unit, professional-development, and technical and specialized training" to the El Salvadoran Armed Forces.<sup>42</sup> The Chief of Staff of the Army, Gen. Edward C. Meyer, emphasized that all the instruction, regardless of the source, would stress the "importance of control and discipline of the armed forces in their treatment of civilian populations and indoctrinate military leaders with principles of the Geneva Convention and the code of conduct."<sup>43</sup> This directive would permeate all the training conducted at USARSA for the militaries of Latin America throughout the eighties and nineties and was directly related to the dramatic decline in human-rights abuses by Salvadoran military personnel during the highest levels of conflict. When USARSA relocated to Fort Benning in 1984, Phase I of the plan was moving toward completion. USARSA continued with the long-term Phase II mission for El Salvador while maintaining its traditional region-wide mission to train and educate selected individuals from the Armies of Latin America as well as serve as a forum for hemispheric dialog.

Despite egregious abuses by Salvadoran soldiers and paramilitaries during 1979 and 1980, the U.S. Government engaged the El Salvadoran Armed Forces early in the conflict and provided the decade-long military training and political oversight needed to influence correct conduct in combat. The success of this 10-year strategy is reflected in a 1991 U.S. Government Accounting Office report. This official account documented the rapid decline from over 750 politically motivated killings per month in 1980 to eight by 1990.<sup>44</sup> When the outrageous murders of six Jesuit priests occurred during the FMLN's "Final Offensive" of 1989, a number of USARSA graduates were found to have been involved. What has seldom been publicized is that two other USARSA graduates – one Salvadoran and one U.S. officer – were those who brought the Salvadoran Armed Forces' responsibility for the killings to the attention of the U.S. Embassy, forcing two investigations that ultimately brought ten soldiers to trial. The assertion that the U.S. military and USARSA were advocating and training Latin Americans to commit human-rights abuses collapses when challenged with the truth.



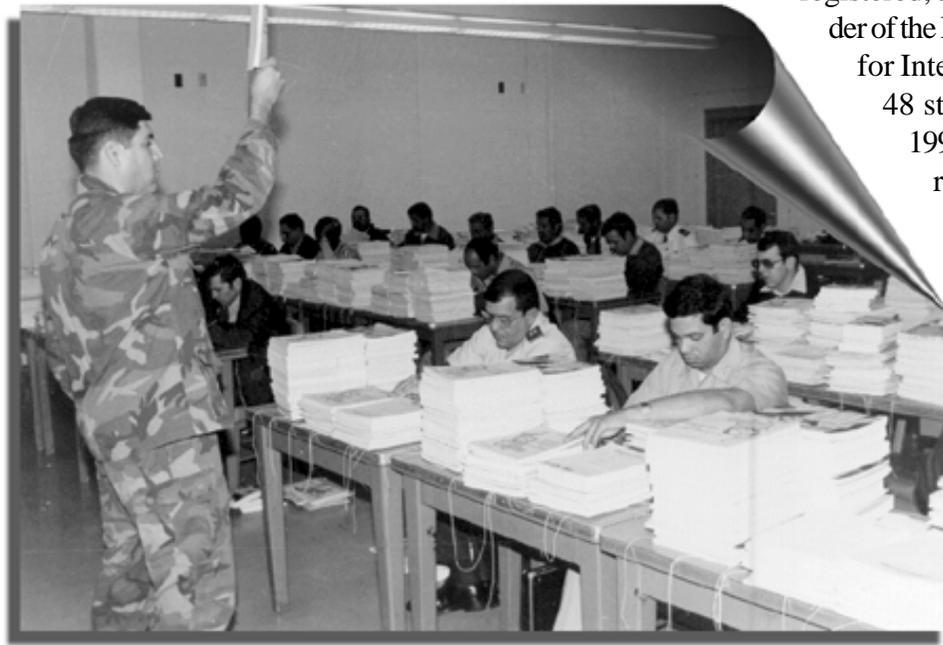
*Engagement promotes respect for Human Rights: when USARSA and other forms of direct U.S. Military assistance were resumed after a period of sanctions, abuses by the armed forces of El Salvador declined dramatically.*

Another example of USARSA's activities resulting in controversy during the conflictive years of the 1980's also began in Panama and continued at Fort Benning. On June 12, 1980, the Chief of Staff of the Army tasked the U.S. Army Intelligence School, located at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, to work with USARSA in developing an intelligence course in order to strengthen regional intelligence-gathering and sharing capabilities.<sup>45</sup> In June 1980, Col. Gary C. Williams, USARSA Commandant, assembled a team of course developers to coordinate instructional requirements between the 193<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group (Airborne), U.S. Southern Command, and other Panama-based assets with the Intelligence School at Fort Huachuca. Course development and coordination with all the involved elements continued through 1981. Fort Huachuca personnel finalized course materials in June 1982. The first course was taught using instructors from the U.S. Army Intelligence School from September 20 – October 23, 1982. One additional course was conducted from March 7 – May 11, 1983, but training was interrupted by the 1984 relocation of USARSA.<sup>46</sup>

From 1985 to 1991, USARSA conducted the Military Intelligence Course annually at Fort Benning using borrowed instructors from the U.S. Army Intelligence School and the 470<sup>th</sup> Military Intelligence Brigade located in Corozal, Panama. In 1988, USARSA established a stand-alone Intelligence Division and began accepting additional instructional responsibilities from the proponent school. In an attempt to coordinate training with USSOUTHCOM's 470<sup>th</sup> MI Brigade, a USARSA instructor traveled to Panama to acquire training materials being used by their Mobile Training Teams that were teaching military intelligence throughout Latin America. The instructor returned with four manuals that a 1991 investigation would later reveal contained pos-

sible classified information.<sup>47</sup> The investigation also discovered 26 phases that "could be construed" to violate current U.S. law or policy.<sup>48</sup> When this deficiency was discovered, the manuals were immediately removed from the Military Intelligence Course manual-issue list, and were collected,

registered, and destroyed by order of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence. A total of 48 students in 1990 and 1991 are thought to have received four of the manuals at USARSA, but the investigation showed that none of the objectionable material had been assigned nor included in classroom instruction. Twelve subsequent investigations found no evidence that



*Students receive their books for a course at USARSA.*

USARSA taught any material that would compromise U.S. morality, integrity, or universal standards of human rights. Nonetheless, this incident has served as the "smoking gun" used by the school's critics to allege that it has served as a criminal influence in Latin America.

Col. Michael Sierra was the transition Commandant who mastered the logistical and organizational task of packing up and moving USARSA by sea, land, and air and reopening it on December 18, 1984 at Fort Benning. The school brought with it from Panama the task of creating new courses to satisfy the regional demand for multinational professional education in both military science and national development left void by Panama's inability to undertake the task.<sup>49</sup> The school committed itself to developing a Preventive Medicine and Medic Course, an Engineer Management Course, and a Psychological Operations Course for the coming year.<sup>50</sup> USARSA reorganized to conform to the TRADOC institutional model, as it was now a full-fledged member school, falling directly under the Commander, Combined Arms Center located at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Two departments were responsible for all the instruction. Senior-level courses such as the Joint Operations, Resource Management, and Command and General Staff Officer Courses, along with intermediate-level courses such as the



*USARSA is the center of attention for the Hispanic community of Columbus, Phenix City, Fort Benning, and the surrounding areas. Wives of the instructors representing each country at USARSA display their traditional dress and customs at various schools and cultural events throughout the years.*

Combat Arms Officer Advanced and Military Intelligence Officer Courses were all taught in the Department of Command and Staff (DCS). The Department of Combat Operations (DCO) presented all other officer, cadet, and noncommissioned-officer courses.<sup>51</sup> The school was now firmly set to continue its mission into the next century.

Col. Miguel A. Garcia accepted the command of USARSA on October 22, 1985. He continued expanding the national-development-type curriculum requested by the Latin American militaries as well as military science-related instruction. The school complied with its commitment to offer the following courses: Psychological Operations, 8 weeks; Engineer Management, 8 weeks; Basic Medicine, 11 weeks; and Preventative Medicine, 3 weeks. A 5-week Infantry Mortar Platoon Leader Course was developed in response to the conflict in El Salvador. The structure of the school continued to have two principle training departments, DCO and DCS. The School Battalion handled all student administration.

Col. Garcia's tenure at USARSA was not marked by new courses or reorganizations, but with the manner in which he led the integration of USARSA and its international make-up into the civilian communities that surround Fort Benning. A local civilian association known as the "USARSA Support Group" was founded to ensure a smooth transition for the school. This organization helped the local population prepare for a large influx of Spanish-speaking foreign families that would be living in their neighborhoods, shopping in their stores, attending their churches, and enrolling their children in the local schools. The Support Group also used its considerable influence to gain political support for Fort Benning, to later be named USARSA's permanent home. The group achieved that particular goal on November 25, 1986.<sup>52</sup> Col. Garcia's reputation also allowed him to travel throughout Latin America developing military-to-military relations that would soon boost attendance at the school. In 1985, one year after its tumultuous move, USARSA trained over 1000 students.