

El Salvador, as befits a heavily-populated country, has an extensive road network. However, while the south of the country is quite well served, both by the Pan-American Highway and by branch roads running north and south from it, the north is not. There, roads are few but tracks abound, especially important in the border regions with Honduras.

The Honduran transportation system reflects its traditional position as the second poorest country in Latin America. Good roads are lacking except for those linking Tegucigalpa with the Pan-American Highway and the northwestern commercial centre of San Pedro Sula, and the highway itself. Elsewhere there are some adequate roads but these are few and far between. Even tracks are rare in the contra-occupied areas of Gracias a Dios and Olancho, although a reasonable road links the capital with the town of Danli, close to some of the most troubled border zones with Nicaragua.

Nicaragua's road network is also far from well developed. In the vast eastern half of the country, forested or even jungle, roads are terribly poor and nearly non-existent. Even Bluefields, the major Caribbean port, has a merely adequate linkage with the capital. Other towns have much less -- a resultant major factor in the non-incorporation of these areas into the national fabric. In the west, the situation is much better. The Pan-American Highway is supplemented by fairly good, if not plentiful, roads in the coastal belt and linking the main cities of Leon, Managua, Masaya and Granada. Another good road leads north from the capital through the threatened areas east and north of Esteli and Jinotega. As mentioned elsewhere, the great lakes of Managua and Nicaragua facilitate transportation in the country, but also pose special problems for security forces.

Costa Rica has, rather surprisingly given its reputation for public works, an unimpressive road system. The peculiar organization of the administrative divisions of the country, as well as other terrain, population and political factors, have brought about a situation where the central plateau is well served with roads while the rest of the country, except for where the Pan-American Highway passes, is much less so. The main cities of the plateau (i.e., Alajuela, Heredia, Cartago and San José itself) are linked with very good roads. Another good road supplements the railway line to the Caribbean port of Limon. Elsewhere paved roads are rare and, as seen in the contra difficulties on the Nicaraguan border earlier in this decade, land transport is difficult and only the track system is at all developed.

The impact of all these terrain, climate and related conditions will be great on elements of a verification organization deployed on the ground. Transportation is very difficult, especially in the border areas so often the haven and operating areas of insurgent groups. However, mobility will be vital for a huge range of the verification activities likely to be included in an eventual peace accord, even a "minimalist" one. Over such considerable distances, quite vast areas, and under the road, terrain, weather and other circumstances discussed, useful mobility in a "real time" sense will require dispersal of human resources, a recourse to technical means to assist in verification, and the provision of significant over-land (probably jeep or Land Rover) and above-land transport, especially helicopters.