



# INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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HUNT: This is an interview with Astor Escalante Saravia. He is the Minister of Public Safety and Justice [*Ministro de Seguridad Pública y Justicia*]. Well, then, I always like to begin these interviews with a biographical sketch of the interviewee. Can you please describe your current position?

SARAVIA: *Well, I am Vice-Minister of Public Safety and Justice [Vice-Ministro de Seguridad Pública y Justicia] of El Salvador. Prior to being Vice-Minister of Public Safety I was Vice-Minister of Citizen Safety. This was in the year 2008. In 2005, I was General Director of our country's Penitentiary System. Before that, I was assistant to the Ministry of Government [Ministerio de Gobernación], which is the ministry, was the ministry, that was in charge of the country's entire public safety apparatus, the public safety departments, and aside from being in charge of the departments of public safety, specifically the National Civil Police [Policía Nacional Civil], National Academy of Public Safety [Academia Nacional de Seguridad Pública], General Office of Immigration and Foreign Affairs [Dirección General de Inmigración y Extranjería], National Anti-Drug Committee [Comisión Nacional Anti-Drogas]; among other things, the Ministry of Government handled the affairs of the National Post Office [Correos Nacionales], the national newspaper, the national printing house, departmental governing, the Firefighters Corps. It coordinated, or it took under its charge, the National System of Civil Protection [Sistema Nacional de Protección Civil], among other things. And the President thought that it was too big a department, too big a ministry, with too many functions, and he decided, based on recommendations he received, he decided to separate that which concretely concerned public safety from other subjects. And that is how just last year, in 2007, this Ministry of Public Safety was created to exclusively look after the subjects I mentioned at the beginning of our conversation: police, prisons, public safety, the National Academy of Public Safety, which we oversee, and this has been the state of affairs since. Before this, I was consultant to some, to a union here in the country, a very important one, which is the National Association of Private Enterprise [Asociación Nacional de la Empresa Privada], which is a conglomerate of institutions and enterprises in the country. And basically I provided support by working as a representative of kidnapping victims in the country. I was prosecutor of... of criminal structures, of criminal gangs, of kidnapping rings, and before that I was... I worked for eight years, for about eight years, in what would be the Attorney General's Office [Fiscalía General de la República]. I was prosecutor for a time, in many cases, coordinator of prosecutors, chief of prosecutors, among other things. I have also worked with university chairs, at the Universidad del Salvador and the Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas, the UC. That is part of what we have done. We have written a couple of... a couple of articles in some magazines.*

HUNT: Very well, then. Thank you very much. As far as your work in the Security department goes, what would you say is your... your specialty that you bring to the department, in, say, administration? Recruitment? Training? Community relations? Investigations? In other words, what would you most like to talk about today?

SARAVIA: *Well, we certainly have to do a bit of everything that has been mentioned. We have managed institutions, large institutions, such as, such as the Penitentiary System of... of the country. And I could talk a bit about every one of these concepts. I don't know which one is of most interest to you and to our conversation...*

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HUNT: Well, why don't we go over internal affairs? And then we could go back to, ahm, recruitment, and training, and professionalization after that. What do you think?

SARAVIA: *Alright. We believe that administration is fundamental for the proper handling of institutions. Our institutions have also learned a lot along the way. The matter of structuring policy is fundamental for our countries and for our country, and occasionally the structuring of these policies raises concerns among different sectors of society. And we have understood that when we are developing a work plan, for instance, when the President begins to develop his... his work plan, a work plan that he offers to the nation, as an institution we must pick up and implement large portions of that work plan within the public safety agencies, strictly speaking. With regard to the National Civil Police, there is an important triennial plan. Within this ministry, a plan known as Plan SARISSA is under development. We are managing a very important fund, which we have named Trust [Fideicomiso] for Public Safety. The president promoted the creation of this public safety and education trust. The Ministry of Public Safety is in charge of managing one hundred and fifty million dollars for this year and the next one. And we are doing our job. We are already 89% into managing this trust, which will strengthen our country's public safety agencies. Of course, we are also in charge of managing human resources, something of utmost importance. There is a training process for the personnel. The focus, the subject of public safety is important, but aside from that, and within the same concept of public safety, we are working extensively on the matter of crime prevention, and this is one of our wagers. And the Ministry effectively manages four or five dependencies that have to do with public safety. I have already mentioned them. These are complex institutions. I believe the National Civil Police could be, if not the largest, the second-largest organization in the country, second-largest public organization and maybe not only public, but if you compare it to private organizations, it is the largest. At the time, we have about 16,500 police officers. There are a number of institutions, also within the Police Office, institutions or sections or divisions that have to be continually coordinated and managed. The General Supervisory Board of the Police [Inspectoría General de la Policía]. Also, the... the elite institutions or elite sections within the National Civil Police. And we believe that what matters is that policy, that plans that are conceived and entertained within an institution do not become frozen plans, frozen policies, that they are not carved in stone, but rather that they can be flexible in order to adapt to current circumstances. For instance, we have taken certain measures. Yesterday, we finished meetings with the General Office of Prisons [Dirección General de Centros Penales] because we have a very large number of inmates in the prison system. There are about 19,500 inmates. We do not have the adequate infrastructure to hold these inmates, and thus we are compelled to look for a reformulation of the policies that are being enforced. We will intensify our work in the prison and outside of the prison, and this will allow for the discharge of a great number of inmates so that they may work. This will not amount to forced labor because the constitution does not allow for that and neither do international agreements. This will also allow us to better administer and manage the ratio of inmates to prison personnel, to name a few examples.*

HUNT: What were the most significant administrative problems that you or the police faced in calling for police officers to meet the goals, objectives, or standards set by or for the police force?

SARAVIA: *Well, I think there are several... several topics, several factors.*

*One of the principal factors has been the matter of resources. We cannot achieve optimal goals in the different areas or within the different objectives that*

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*can be set for different enterprises if we cannot rely on having adequate resources. Not just human resources, which are fundamental, essential, but also material resources, administrative resources. I think this was one of the first matters that posed an obstacle for us at one point or another. Nonetheless, in my opinion we carry a history of success in fighting common and organized crime in our country. We are overcoming this... matter.*

*I believe there is another important matter and that is the matter of the conceptual frameworks within which certain institutions are founded. Important concepts such as the notions of mission, of vision, of mysticism itself [la mística misma], the vocation for public service, that is, to see ourselves truly as public servants and not as men and women of power: as men and women of service. I think this is... this is key. I believe that conceptual framework, which can be constructed at a given moment to create an institution, matters a great deal, because the vibe, if you will, the philosophical vibe, the task, can be internalized by the members of a whole organization from the beginning. For instance, if I tell a person: "Look, you will work from eight to twelve hours a day," for instance, and a year, a couple of years, three years go by and he or she keeps working on the same task, and real needs call for a different work schedule, it will be difficult, it will be traumatic, to implement a change. To tell people, for instance, as far as the police goes... it was founded on the idea of a national civil police, which is still a current notion, and rightly so, we believe. This is a civil concept. But this also brought along certain elements that I, personally, do not approve of and that we have gradually modified. The... the idea that the police officer is stationed exactly where he lives and that he completes his official duties there... In our milieu, and also, I believe, in the case of the larger part of the countries of the world, it is not adequate for a police officer to live exactly in the site where he works. This might not be the case for certain sectors or divisions of the police, but it is so for the larger part of police officers. For instance, there are times when police officers know the area criminals and these criminals can threaten the police officers by saying: "I know the whereabouts of your children or your wife as she goes to work, and that of your daughters as they go to school." And this, at a given moment, can hinder, right?, the... the spirit of, of performance and effectiveness that a particular police officer might have. There can also be degrees of trust and actually this has been the case in our country, these problems, in certain areas of the country. We began to... we decided to rotate police officers. The Minister René Figueroa, who heads the safety and security team, made this decision together with the head of the police, Rodrigo Ávila-Avilés. This decision was taken and now it is something customary within the corps and it is working quite well. These kinds of situations are complicated. Of course, the human element is complicated because you have to endow the police officer not just with the necessary tools but also with complementary conditions that are inherent to him: an adequate salary, health benefits, among other things. I think this is fundamental. And there are always limits on resources and at the time we are exploring appropriate measures. There is a compensation mechanism to deal with the matter of police officer salaries and we are looking into situations that translate into complementary income for the police officers. We are working on policy related to this matter.*

HUNT: Very well, thank you. At a more national level, in shaping these reform programs, who has participated in the process?

SARAVIA: You mean individuals or institutions?

HUNT: Institutions.

SARAVIA: *Well, the principal source has been the National Civil Police and the Ministry of Public Safety. There are institutions that have, that have been created in the country, that have also contributed to this, like, for instance, the National Commission for Security and Peace [Comisión Nacional Para la Seguridad y Paz Social], which turned in a document with important recommendations last year. They are... to materialize all these recommendations would take millions of dollars, but several of them that can already be implemented are already being implemented by the president and by the Ministry of Public Safety. And other civil institutions have participated as well. For instance, Fusades has made recommendations as well. Fusades is a renowned institution, very important in the country. They have... there have been many roundtables. When... when it was delivered... when this public safety fund was first administered, at a time when we were still the Ministry of Government, in the year 2005, 2004... 2005, what happened is that the ministry called for roundtables that were named Agreement Tables and a number of participating institutions were present at these tables. A number of NGOs, which, if I list one by one... I will not mention all of them, but I will mention those that... those that I best recall. Institutions like... educational institutions: the Fundación Salvadoreña para el Desarrollo Económico y Social (FUSADES, Salvadoran Foundation for Economic and Social Development), the Asociación Nacional de la Empresa Privada El Salvador (ANEP, National Association of Salvadoran Private Companies), representatives of the judiciary system, that is, institutions for prevention like the Fundación Anti-drogas El Salvador (FUNDASALVA, Salvadoran Anti-Drug Foundation), the Fundación de Estudios para la Aplicación del Derecho (FESPAD, or Foundation for Applied Legal Studies), for instance; the... some important projects, such as the Polígono Don Bosco, that is known for... that is headed by father Pepe Morataya, who is a... a kind of institution that works towards the rehabilitation of gang members. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) participated as an observer, and also as important administrative support purveyor. And a number of roundtables were organized where advice and suggestions were exchanged. And there was also space to... to, let us say, to... what do you call this? To discuss, demand and bring up some truths that certain sectors might have kept hidden. Political parties participated in the roundtables. And a document with recommendations was received, recommendations that have to do with a criminal policy, with... The most important points have to do with criminal policy, such as crime prevention. Crime repression too, something which is not approved by some, something which I call... the concept, I call it by that name. Rehabilitation and re-insertion of criminals as well. International consultants also participated. And from this start point, several activities were coordinated. First, several important legislative reforms were implemented. And then we took the road to... towards realizing some of the recommendations, those that our institutional reality allowed for.*

*Now, for instance, thanks to this National Committee on, on... on Public Safety and Social Peace [Comisión Nacional de Seguridad y Paz Social], which the president instituted just last year, many of the recommendations are being implemented. For instance, there was a recommendation about enactment of new legislation concerning the penal process. It is being... a new penal code was formulated. It has been presented to the Legislative Assembly. It is being discussed. Surely, many sectors will... will question it. Both the Legislative Assembly and an ad hoc committee that is looking into this are still accepting recommendations.*

*Last year, a law was enacted in the country against organized crime and crimes of complex execution. Then, specialized courts were set up, and they are*

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*yielding very good results in the fight against organized crime. And there are important agencies that are directly or indirectly applying many of the recommendations that were made.*

*Excuse me, may we take a break? Please?*

(interrupted)

HUNT: Second part. Interview with the Vice-Minister of Public Safety and Justice Astor Escalante Saravia. Sir, you were just speaking to me about the reforms that have been implemented in the area of Public Safety. Can you tell me a bit more and...? Has there been an effort to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Public Safety, and what has that process been like?

SARAVIA: *Yes. The truth is that this ministry has forwarded a series of proposals seeking a legal strengthening in the country. And, for instance, we have been enacting law reforms concerning penitentiary law, which have been very helpful to us. To mention a few examples: before, anyone could take a cell phone into a prison, give it to an inmate, and nothing could be done to sanction that person besides lightly scolding him or her. Now, this behavior has been banned thanks to important reforms that were presented to the Assembly. Also, besides the banning, there is a... there is a penal category, in other words, smuggling unauthorized objects into prisons was criminalized and a list of different objects has been made.*

*There has been... there has been reform in the country. If one speaks of the time span from the end of the war up until this point, the country has gone through important legal reforms. Around 1998, the current legal codes were enacted: the legal code, the legal code on penal process, the penitentiary law itself. We believe that the legal code on penal process is no longer adequate, a code which has gone through a number of reforms in the country, and that the time is right for the enactment of a new legal code on penal process. This ministry has lobbied for this. We were the first ones to propose... this. Afterwards, we submitted it to the coordinating committee of the Department of Justice, which I find important due to the fact that it is constituted by different institutions: the judicial branch [el órgano judicial], the Federal Attorney General's Office [Fiscalía General de la República], the General Prosecutor's Office [Procuraduría General de la República], the National Council for Adjudication [Consejo Nacional de la Adjudicación], and us as the Ministry of Public Safety and Justice. The proposal for the new code was submitted to the committee, and a drafting committee representing all the institutions involved was appointed. This committee completed the task and the draft was presented to the Legislative Assembly by the minister and by me. We believe this legal instrument is fundamental. We have been proposing a constitutional reform, but this requires ratification and the 56 votes needed for that have not been gathered. There is opposition coming from the opposition party, the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMNL, Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation), which refuses to vote in favor of this proposal, a proposal that we believe is important in the fight against organized crime, common crime and transnational crime.*

*There are other proposals that have been presented to the Legislative Assembly and that have been passed. For instance, the constitutional procedural law was reformed. In matters that are strictly legal or judiciary.... there is a norm in the constitution that allows judges to declare any regulation unconstitutional. This meant that, in the case of criminals, the judges would set them free and later, even after appeals were filed, criminals were no longer in custody. And if the*

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*judge's initial decision was revoked, things got difficult. Thus, the constitutional reform I just mentioned stated: "Alright. You, in your capacity as a judge, can continue to declare unconstitutional... the unconstitutionality of certain regulations, but you have to submit your judgment, your verdict, to a higher court so that it may ratify or deny your opinion. And you may not set a criminal free until your decision is ratified." This deci... this resolution has been implemented. This... this... these reforms are important.*

*There are other reforms on the way. But little by little the structure has been strengthened. With regard to the police, for instance, the police law has been modified over time. Certain aspects of the law have been reformed to raise police officers in rank. Recently, a decree called "Chief Inspector" [Inspector Jefe] was submitted to the Legislative Assembly, because there was no existing procedure in the corps to attain that rank. There is also a law, which was proposed by this ministry, a law... a law on discipline in the police corps, which is important and which is already being implemented in the corps. This law has allowed and continues to allow for greater objectivity in sanctioning gra... light, grave, and very grave offenses. There is now a more expeditious process for these matters and this has led to, in addition, to the creating of appeal... appeal courts. These are administrative courts that allow us to have more control over matters of discipline, in controlling the irregular behavior of a police officers, and, also, in cases where crimes have been committed, a speedy investigation is carried out so as to bring these crimes to courts of justice.*

*We believe that... that the laws that a country has are not sufficient for the strengthening of... to strengthen, along the way, the safety of a country. I believe that there are two laws which we should have and that any country should have and that we as of yet do not have. In our case, there is a law called the ownership appropriation or asset recovery law, which, to say it in very intelligible words because explaining it thoroughly would require more than the time allotted for our conversation—it is a law that allows one or would allow one to confiscate the property of criminals so as to fund rehabilitation programs and fight against crime programs using that property. We have seen that criminals handle considerable amounts of money, here as in any part of the world. So, the matter of drug trafficking, the matter of money laundering, etc... There are instruments in the country that allow for the prosecution of these criminal activities, such as the law against drug-related activities, the law against money laundering, the law of supervision of the financial system, etc. However, the ownership appropriation or asset recovery law, which was also presented to the Assembly by the minister, a project that is already in the assembly and that has not been approved, would allow us to go ahead with the confiscation of that property, the product of irregular or illegal activities, and to take it as soon as possible from the criminals' hands. I believe that much can be achieved with this because we would bring about, without a doubt, two effects: first, you strike a blow to criminality, to organized crime, because you take away their means of operation, the logistical means that they might have, their money, their goods, their infrastructure, etc., you weaken these criminal organizations; and then, with that same money, with those same resources, you can do good, that is to say, you can strengthen the struggle, the fight against crime and, of course, you can establish mechanisms, rehabilitation programs, for those that have committed criminal deeds, or re... rehabilitate, for instance, those that... people that are victims of drug-addiction, or human trafficking, etc.*

*And the other thing... Excuse me....*

HUNT: No, no. Please, continue.

SARAVIA: .... because I only mentioned one thing, and I almost forgot. I think it is important that... prevention laws. Prevention cannot just be, in my opinion, programs that... there are work programs, "programas de adscripción" so that a person can free him or herself from drug addiction. I believe that... prevention must also include degrees of coercion, as lawyers call it. That is to say, prevention must also have a measure of force so that it can be achieved. And notice that in our country there are particular programs that, in my opinion, are working very well, with the aid of cooperating institutions and also with the help of state agencies. For instance, there are programs called CREA, there is a project called CREA that helps to set people free from drug-addiction, but these are programs that work under a very, very strict system, programs where the... the... that person who is in there, in order for him or her to leave, let's say, for the weekend, this person must go through five or ten check points. And they have a work mystique [i.e. a work ethic] that is important. So, you are dealing, for instance, with people that are involved in the drug world. These people that are involved in the drug world usually commit crimes, will usually commit crimes during their life span, and if you are looking at them right there and then, why not have a legal instrument that would allow you to take them in? I am going to use this concept that would allow you to recruit these people. And to tell them: "Alright. Look, you guys, you are here. You will be subject to such and such procedure. We will ask this judge to decree certain measures, internment measures, treatment measures, to free you from this, and you will have workdays in such and such way, right?" I believe this is important. And this way, you also prevent. At the time, we have this arrangement available on a volunteer basis in the country. A lot of prevention work is going on in these programs. But there must be a law that allows us to do that. There are people that can be hanging out at a given place, not just here but anywhere in the world, maybe they are at the street corner or by the traffic lights asking you for change, and they can have, well, they may have a stone in their hand, so that they will break your windshield if you don't give them money. And this disrupts tranquility and social peace. So I believe that we should have laws like that, besides the one that I already mentioned, for instance, a law that allows for the tapping of telecommunications. This is the only way in which developed countries and countries that respect human rights have reached the highest criminal strata of certain social organizations. And... it is an instrument that is tremendously important and that should not be subject to judicial questioning should there be a law that allowed for it.

HUNT: Going back to the topic of the National Civil Police. Can you tell me about the reforms that have been implemented in this agency in this country?

SARAVIA: Well, I believe that they are... that they are important reforms. First of all, maybe we can talk about the creation of... there are things, and I'll be honest with you, things that I like, others that I don't like. I do not agree with certain things. For instance, our country, having overcome the armed conflict, and, by the way, it is... it is an important example, maybe even a referent at a global level, because after we signed the peace treaties there was not a single bullet shot between the parties that were at war, between armed forces, between institutions of public safety and the... the FMLN, which was a coalition of five organizations, among which the Communist Party always had a significant role, and nowadays it continues to dominate in the make-up of the FMLN. But after we signed the peace treaties, there was not a single bullet shot, and that is most important. Of course there are other problems that the civil war would not allow us to perceive, to perceive in, say, a careful manner. The... the impact of the conflict itself, let's say, practically wiped out other factions. But once the agencies were created, the National Civil Police, the National Council for Adjudication, the National

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*Academy of Public Safety, the Attorney's Office for the Defense of Human Rights. The structuring of the police was carried out, let's say, by people hailing from all sectors of the country. People that were part of the FMNL came into the force, right? People that belonged to the armed forces and also civilians. And a... an agency was formed, a corps that... I did not particularly like that initial corps... I did not... I don't like it very much. Because I believe that it generates important differences, and that it can generate important differences within... within an institution. At a given moment, if it is not handled appropriately, it can break with institutionalism. It can even run the risk of creating different factions within a police corps that has effectively brought together guerrilla fighters with soldiers and with civilians. That part of it all, I do not think much of it. Thank God it has not given us much trouble. We have had a police agency that, I want to tell you, is also an example, I wouldn't... I would not say at the global level, but, well, it is an example and it does have the recognition of the United Nations. They ask us, our police force, for representatives from the ranks of our officers, so that they can work on, on... on peacekeeping missions in different institu... in different countries. Our armed forces have been called upon at different points in time. The armed forces are deployed as representatives of... They are part of a deployment of blue-helmets that have been called upon recently to work in Lebanon. And I believe that process of integration has its pros and cons. What was done in order to create the National Civil Police? Well, a general law for the National Civil Police was drafted. A law for the National Academy of Public Safety was also created. Within the National Civil Police, a General Supervision Office of the Police was created. There are internal affairs units within the police corps. And a number of different efforts have been developed so as to transform the police permanently. I believe that the civic disposition that the police corps has displayed is important, as is the civic way in which they carry themselves. This is extremely important. It was launched under civilian leadership. It had one, two civilian directors, three of them. Afterwards, during a presidential administration, a director who was not a civilian was named. He came, let's say, from the ranks of the police, a commissioner, Ricardo Meneses. He is now the only general director of the national police force that was not a civilian but that came from the ranks of the police itself. After him, the rest have been civilians and the heads of our ministries have been civilians. From the moment we had the National Civil Police there have been no military figures directing what used to be the Ministry of Government, now the Ministry of Public Safety, and I believe that it is important, the... Just the other day there was a change of directors. The new director is, let's say, new, relatively new. He's been around for six months, because our ex-director is now a presidential candidate and he is now engaged in political work.*

*I believe the control mechanisms that the National Civil Police has are also important. There is a council for police ethics that is named by the President. It is made up of people who are not just from the Public Safety milieu, from the Public Safety cabinet, but also of private citizens and... all of us are civilians, all of us that form part of that council on police ethics. There are important university officials, businessmen, and this serves to, let's say, control the activity of the police. The National Academy of Public Safety, as Licenciado Cestoni must have told you, also has a council, an education council. And these relationships between these agencies, between the council on education, the Academy of Public Safety, the council on... on police ethics, the ministry heads, other agencies that have been organized, I would say they allow for good managing of the National Civil Police. Because we must remember that the Academy is an important part of personnel training. There have been, maybe not reforms but important decisions, for this governmental administration, such as the... the retraining of police officers, which was not implemented for many years,*

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*and this has been very useful. The National Civil Police, many of its ranks, from the executive level up, let's say from the level of supervisors up: inspector, chief inspector, now that we have a procedure, sub - commissioner, commissioner, etc. Many of these people are professionals. They... they are engineers, doctors, lawyers... There are a number of bachelors in education, in psychology, and they also have their police degree.*

HUNT: I have another question that is somewhat more detailed. This is to say, in other places, the commissioners and chiefs of police have pointed out that the ranking structure is an obstacle for the creation of an effective police force. Do you believe that this system works well here, or have you tried to change it since it was created, since the National Civil Police was created?

SARAVIA: *I believe ranks are important. I believe... I believe discipline is important. I don't... I do not know what a comparative model would look like, one that could be proposed in a situation in which an organization does not have ranks. I see ranks as a structure, as a hierarchical organization, and naturally this hierarchical organization allows for different levels of discipline within the force. I don't believe that all of us can be equals. We are all equal in the eyes of the law. But I believe that, for instance, if you... if I had to make a comparison between a police corps and a judiciary agency, which I believe would be, in my opinion, I believe it will be a ridiculous thing, to say that all judges will be equal. And that if, for instance, I, as a judge, make a mistake, I do not have anyone to supervise me and tell me: "Look, you've made a mistake here."*

HUNT: Actually, I am referring to whether that system has been reformed, or if the system that you've had since the beginning, that is, the fact that those at the executive level have higher education and that the police force as a whole requires a high school degree... I am wondering if that has been successful, in your opinion, or if you think it ought to be changed.

SARAVIA: *Well, ideally, everyone in the force would be a professional, right? We have 16,500 individuals in our organization. Among them, the majority are police officers who belong to the basic level. And... I... perhaps ideally we would all be professionals, no doubt. The realities of our country demand that we have those... those levels. Maybe sometime in the future, this can be viewed as a kind of objective, to count on every officer of a police corps to be a professional, to have a college degree. You would also have to deal with the problems that this can bring along with it. Because you cannot just want, you cannot just want to do things. One has to be able to do them. That is, I would like to have.... truth be told, I am not a man of many pleasures, but, well, I would like to have a bigger house than the one I have now, a house with a huge garden, if possible with an area that could not only hold a garden but also an area where one could grow things, where one could plant things, but I need to have the resources to have a house like that. As far as the police force is concerned, well, you would need a different payroll system, a different system of benefits, and permanent training to be undertaken periodically. I believe that we are carrying out permanent training for the levels and ranks that now exist. In fact, the country has an agency, which is also important. The country has agencies that are referents on matters of public safety at a regional level. We have ILEA (International Law Enforcement Academy), which is the school of law enforcement. At the time, its headquarters are at the... It is hosted by the National Academy of Public Safety. There is already a plot of land to erect a building of its own. And this is allowing for important training, not just for our police officers, but also for officers from other...*

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*other parts of the world. Right now, I am in the process of signing a document so that... I've already sent the document, yesterday, for the creation of a new course that is being administered at the National Academy of Se... at the... the ILEA, a course which touches upon the fight against the maras or gangs. Judges, prosecutors and police officers will be attending that course.*

*So I do believe that our goal may be to have an even better police force. Although I want to tell you, and this is a thought that is very, very much aside from the main point, that the fact that a person does not hold a university degree does not take away from his abilities, his capacities, his skills and his in... his common sense, his ability to solve problems. The officer on the streets, the highway patrol, the traffic control officers are all transformed into judges that must decide how to go about enforcing the law on the very first instance, so to speak. They are at the front line. Thus, I believe that there are many individuals in our country that I would call professionals of public safety belonging to different ranks, different cultural or academic ranks, if you will. But they are still professionals in public safety. You have, here as in any police force in the world, you find challenges to address, problems to solve. Arbitrary acts. Irregularities. So, you are confronted with an occurrence that must be corrected. But at the time I... the level of academic requirements and the professional development that police officers have is not, in my view, problematic, it is not complicated, I do not find it to be a barrier to the constitution of a better police force. It can work, even under these conditions and, of course, if we work to improve on other important issues.*

HUNT: Very well. Speaking of the police officers, as you said, that are in the... in the National Civil Police... Many countries have a problem, with corruption, with bribes and that type of thing. Have you witnessed this type of problem in the country from your current position?

SARAVIA: *Some cases have been reported, and they have been solved immediately. Some cases have come up where the director of the police force himself has captured bad police officers. The ex-director, for instance, Rodrigo Ávila, personally lead an operative to capture bad elements within a certain police unit. And they were captured, submitted to the authorities and justice is being served. The subject, for instance, of traffic control, which is the one that most lends itself to this, and that has been a kind of ref... an international referent of corruption, here, we had some problems, and measures were taken.*

HUNT: Could you elaborate on the measures that were taken?

SARAVIA: *For instance, some basic measures were taken and other things were done that apparently, at first sight, do not amount to much but that worked well for us. Traffic control officers were dressed in the same colors, in the same uniforms as public safety officers. The same uniform, there was no difference. The first measure taken by the police administration was to change the uniforms worn by traffic control officers. Another uniform was assigned to them, a white shirt, and a badge, a more clearly identified logo, the officer's code number. They were also given a vest. And this, for starters, had an impact and caused a shift even at the level of perception, which is important. Because many aspects of corruption and other problems that might afflict our countries are to a great extent perception problems rather than real problems. And an important shift in perception was achieved. Besides that, the Sub - Direction for Over-Land Transit began showing important shifts in issuing citations, in controlling car traffic, in addressing that headache of ours: public transportation personnel. There are not many Salvadorans that are fond of drivers. They are pejoratively called buseros,*

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*right? I don't like them very much because of the way they behave. And we have publicly reprimanded them on a number of occasions. And there were changes in management and I believe this has worked well for us. I am not trying to tell you that our National Civil Police is... an immaculate organization. I believe that... I don't know if there can be tremendously immaculate organizations anywhere in the world.*

HUNT: No, I don't believe so.

SARAVIA: *Because all organizations are made up of... of human beings. Human beings are, we are... we are good, we are bad, depending on the circumstances and the situations where we find ourselves. But this has been an important shift and let me tell you that I have made a few comparisons, not exactly scientific, more like small surveys that I have conducted with diplomatic officials that have been in our country. I know that diplomats are diplomats but... but I'm happy when they tell me that... well, it's not that I'm happy, because I would not like this to happen at all, but they have told me about their experiences in other countries. They have told me about the way in which they have been treated by police officers and then they have made a comparison between those experiences and our country and they have suggested that there exists an enormous difference. A European diplomat, an ambassador, was telling me a few months ago: "Look, I was in a certain part of the world," I won't tell you which part, "and the police officers assigned to protect me were substituted for other officers. And when the switch took place they asked me whether I was going to give them money or not." That is to say, they asked him for money. And then he did not know what to do and he told me that he ended up handing money over to them. The... a few years ago, at a time when I did have the chance to go on vacation, I left the country a few years ago by car to go to a certain part of Central America and I had an incident with a police officer whom I did not expect to be the kind of officer who would ask me for money. Well, he asked me for money, a transit officer, that is, an officer from another country, from a country in the region that never in my life I thought would give way to this kind of incident. So, if... if you make a few comparisons I believe that our police force, as far as those issues go, is very, very safe. This does not mean that there is not a problem with corruption. What matters is that when we detect the existence of those problems, we immediately halt things, and it has—The minister, right?, he has been one of the main leaders, I would say, together with the President, one of the main leaders to have said: "Alright. We will not tolerate any act of corruption, any act that generates trouble." And they are turned over to laws that exist in this country, turned over to the general supervisory board. I was telling you that one of the benefits that this police force has is that it possesses several control mechanisms. There is an Office for Human Rights that also controls the current police force, the Attorney General's office itself, among other agencies.*

HUNT: The subject of reducing brutality on the part of the police is something that is very important for many people involved in international reform programs, right? What options have you considered in regards to this problem, if, indeed, this has been a problem here? Or what options do you consider important for the National Civil Police to entertain?

SARAVIA: *Well, I believe that raising awareness amongst the personnel, that making the personnel more conscientious, is important. I believe police force doctrine is important. And there are things that are being done now that go beyond the concepts I have mentioned to you. Beyond doctrine-related concepts. At the time, there are, in fact, things being done in the country, in our police force, that I believe are working very well and will work very well. For instance, there is a*

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*campaign we are conducting in the provinces concerning the National Civil Police, and it consists of distributing DVDs and handing out CDs that display in TV screens the proper way for a police officer to behave and instances of inappropriate behavior on the part of police officers. And there are... real-life cases are presented, right?, reenacted, where, for instance, one of the... one of the more immediate things, just to give an example, the subject itself of transit. There is a police officer that tells a driver: "Get out of the car. Give me your documents." He commands things like: "Spread your legs." And then he starts searching the driver. That is... that is behavior... this police officer did not greet the driver, he didn't do anything. And the flip side of the coin, the proper officer, he pulls the driver over, he greets him: "Good morning, sir. Good morning, madam. May I please have your documents?" He explains that a traffic control is being conducted, that public safety is being sought after and that for their own good and for the sake of other citizens his or her vehicle will need to be registered, and he requests that the... that the trunk is opened, etc. So, these things are being done the right way... this is but a small example. There are ideas that are being considered during these internal trainings and this amounts to raising awareness. Besides that, we are in constant communication with the coordinator for Human Rights. I can't recall whether we signed a deal with the Attorney General, or whether we are about to sign it, a treaty that seeks to promote the protection of human rights. Within the police organization we also have a committee for Human Rights and I think what is most important is for the police officer to know that he can use force but not indulge in police brutality. This is a fundamental distinction that is unfortunately... I would say that a great deal of the police organizations of the world... There are wrong procedures in place. There are videos from all over the world constantly popping up for one to see, and now with the advantages of technology and media, you can record a video on a phone and upload it to the internet and any human being can see it. So, then, to strengthen these kinds of concepts, I think this is key. We have had a few incidents that have been cause for concern to us, or that at the very least have brought a great deal of shame to us. Last time, we had an incident at a school right here in the country. There was no adequate police procedure. Some students at that school were beaten. The students also put up... they harmed a police officer and an inquiry was set in motion. It was submitted to the Inspectorate and the case has been brought to the disciplinary courts. I personally accompanied the Minister of Education and we went to that school, classroom by classroom, to offer an apology on behalf of the current police force, on behalf of the current cabinet. Classroom by classroom. We must have walked for about three hours in that school. And these are issues that we truly do not want to experience again. And these are things that are beyond a...a... an officer's appropriate behavior and they must be sanctioned. Whenever there are incidents I think they must be sanctioned. I believe that one has to be rigorous in sanctioning, because it is an example one sets so that other police officers know that they must behave in an appropriate manner. But this does not mean that the police officer will just let someone kill him. I believe that the police officer knows the moment when he will pull out a gun and shoot before the criminal takes out a knife and kills him, or takes out another gun to go after the officer's life.*

HUNT: In your opinion, what are the obstacles that you have confronted in trying to improve the internal administration of the Public Safety system?

SARAVIA: *Well, I believe that political polarization is an issue that prevents not just improving on this subject but also on other subjects of national importance for a country. Because there are areas that are lacking, and that... that... that, really, it is easy, I believe, to strengthen them. For instance, the matter of judicially strengthening the instruments for the safety of the country, generally speaking,*

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*which I believe to be vital. I believe safety is also improved when you improve procedures, in this case, legal procedures. And also that what I mentioned first, the subject of resources, is also limiting. The issue of resources is a situation that I believe every police organization will have to deal with, at any level. Resources can motivate police corps to a better job. Yesterday, we delivered to the unit for the maintenance of order, which is a special unit that is practically within the police corps, we gave them equipment for their task, police cars... They were given protectors, shields, batons, a whole set of... a set of police implements that allow one to take control of irregular situations, complicated situations, using force in an adequate manner. So the police officers were very happy yesterday when we delivered that equipment, which is part of the fund. They were happy. And they're also going to have bullet-proof vests, because in the past these units did not wear bullet-proof vests but we had a regrettable incident in which a member of an organization called Brigadas Revolucionarias Estudiantiles Salvadoreñas (BRES, Revolutionary Student Brigades of El Salvador), they eliminated... he eliminated two police officers from the unit for maintenance of order (UMO, Unidad de Mantenimiento del Orden) using an M-16, and wounded another ten officers or so. These are very violent groups. They have an allegiance, a certain relationship with a political party and that experience required that we provide bullet-proof vests for these officers that reestablish order during some types of demonstrations when these have surpassed the levels of tolerance that can be expected, so to speak, or that can be demanded.*

*The matter of resources is important, right? I think the matter of police doctrine is also important. I believe there should be democracy in institutions but I believe it is important that we understand democracy in an appropriate manner. Democracy does not mean that a subordinate will disrespect his superior. I do not agree, for instance, with a police officer's not even getting up and greeting his superior when his superior is walking by, right? On the issue of saluting, there can be several different modalities. To stand to attention is one of them, to take one's hand to... to one's head as a saluting gesture. Another gesture consists in saying: "Good morning, officer." I don't know. But I believe this kind of respect is important. You cannot have an organization, not even a civilian organization, in which when my boss comes into the room, the Minister, I don't stand up and say: "How's it going? How are you? Have a seat." We can be friends, we can treat each other informally, but at the very least I will get up and say: "How's it going, Minister? How are you?" And salute... and I will greet him. So, then, I believe that discipline within an institution is important. And sometimes, after you move past, after you overcome an internal conflict, and you bring a model that takes in all this, all those concepts, at times it is possible to confound the concept of being a National Civil Police officer, right? It can be confused. At a given moment this can affect discipline and this can cause a great deal of harm to the agency and to the safety of the country.*

HUNT: Well, then. Since we're running out of time already... I'm sure we could stay here for hours asking questions, but I know that you are a very busy man. Well, thank you very much for your time and your dedication to this interview. I have one more question for you, one that is more expansive. If you had to write a manual for people that had to construct police units in problematic contexts, what subjects would you consider to be the most important ones?

SARAVIA: *The subject of administration, of initial organization of the police corps. The matter of resources. The training of human resources. The needs of the members of the corps. The specializations that will be needed. I believe the subject of police doctrine is important. Police discipline is important. Respect for*

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*Human Rights is fundamental. I also believe that the police agency has levels of command and of discipline, that is, levels of institutional hierarchy. I have not yet been able to find a police corps where all members have the same rank, that is to say, a horizontal organization. I have not been able to find it. Even less so in a critical moment when you find yourself in a society that is moving from war to times of peace. Because there are... there are many fibers of that society that remain sensitive, hurt, right? The social fabric has been torn. I believe it is necessary to have an agency that reflects this... this discipline so that it may have an increased efficiency. If, for instance, there is no discipline, the... an element of the agency will commit a given mistake and he will be forgiven and nobody will say anything. I believe judiciary tools are necessary, that is, laws are necessary, right? Laws for the creation of these institutions. I believe the clear definition of the disciplinary regime is important, as is a clear principle of legality so that all of us know the mistakes that we might make, the sanctions that we might... the sanctions that might apply to us if we make those mistakes, that we know exactly what disciplinary organization will sanction these penalties, which disciplinary courts. I believe it is important to have a supervisory board that controls the behavior of the corps. The... In a police organization, I believe it is also expedient to have mechanisms for internal training and also for external training, to have them permanently. I also believe it is important to have a purge mechanism, right? For self-imposed purges and external purges. I think this is fundamental. And the... the... the basic thing, right? I know that anyone who sets out to plan the formation of a police corps will take into account the subject of resources of every kind. The matter of resources, a good administration of those resources, and a good administration of the agency itself. And to think about, to think of... to think that this police agency has to have a good philosophy, a sound mission, a clear vision of where it is heading to and what are the interests it must protect, the interests that this police agency must serve and protect, which are the interests of the people, of the population, that is to say, of the human being that it will have to... provide safety for. That is what..*