



# INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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HUNT: Could you state your complete name and give us a description of your current position?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Of course. My name is Carlos Humberto Vargas García. Right now, I am the chief of studies at the Academia Nacional de Seguridad Pública in El Salvador. I've had this post for a year and a half, but I was fortunate enough to be the first assistant director of this institution during the first years of the Academia, back in 1992-1993, and I worked for three years as the assistant director of that institution. And today, in the interest of work efficiency, the current director invited me once again to join the project due to the knowledge I have in matters of education.*

HUNT: Very interesting. Thank you very much. Could you tell us about the positions you held before you started working with the police?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Well, as I mentioned before, there were two phases to my work here in the police academy. It is important to note that in our country, the police and the police academy are separate; that is to say, the police director cannot give orders to us, and neither can the director of the academy give orders to the institution. So these are two separate institutions. Before I started as the first assistant director of the academy, I had worked in the private as well as in the public sector, and in the private sector I had worked for 12 years as a university instructor. I was a professor in private universities, and I went on to become the chief instructor at the dean's office of engineering at the Universidad Tecnológica [Universidad Tecnológica de El Salvador], which is currently the private university with the most students in all of Central America. There is no other private university with as many students. From there, I worked in the public sector as chief of human resources, administrative chief at the Ministry of Justice [Ministerio de Justicia], and working at other universities such as the UCA [Universidad Centroamericana "José Simeón Cañas"], the Universidad Modular Abierta... And that is how I got to be invited to be part of the initial project of the Academia Nacional de Seguridad Pública. In the first phase, I worked for almost three years as the assistant director. During that time, the academy had the support of many countries. There were some truly great experiences then, almost all of them positive, definitely. Specifically, I received training from this institution from the United States called ICITAP [International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program]. I had the opportunity to travel to some academies in Central America, and I came close to completing an almost month-long internship in different states of the United States: seeing how they worked, the police academies there, with the intention of stimulating the project that we were then starting. Then that first phase of mine in the academy ended, and I moved on to the private sector, working different posts in construction companies, in banks—in the banking sector, but always maintaining links to universities, because one of my things, one of the things I've always liked, is to be in touch with the youth, in other words, to teach. From there I went on to the Instituto Salvadoreño de Formación Profesional, the INSAFORP, which is in charge of what we call non-formal education in the country. The Ministry of Education [Ministerio de Educación] is in charge of formal education, and this institute is in charge of non-formal education; I spent about five years in two manager's offices there. One of them is the Gerencia de Asesoría a Empresas, where I administered the budget to train the personnel of private enterprises. I learned about matters of training, and after that I moved to the Gerencia Técnica of the INSAFORP, and it was there where I got to learn about methodologies based on competences. I have been fortunate to have mentors that worked under Mr. Norton [Dr. Robert Norton], who is one of the creators of that teaching*

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*methodology. From there, I was invited by the current director of the academy to come back to the institution. And currently I work as chief of studies, given my long experience in education, and given that he needed to take projects forward, and that is how I came back to the academy in January of last year, but this time in the capacity of chief of studies.*

HUNT: Very interesting. Thank you. Do you have a special task within the work of the academy? In other words, for instance, administration, recruiting, training? Obviously, you've held many positions throughout the years...

VARGAS GARCÍA: Yes, yes. Yes, I do.

HUNT: Which one of those do you think you can discuss in more depth?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Well, maybe we can talk about two things. One of them is the experience I have had in matters of labor competence. As I already said, INSAFORP is the institution that promotes this methodology in the country. The private sectors, universities, they have tried to promote it, but that is very different from the work performed by the INSAFORP. Because INSAFORP is an institution with its own budget, has many resources, and we received constant training in that respect. It allowed me to travel to Chile and Mexico to receive educational experiences related to the matter of competences. And in terms of my professional background, I am an industrial engineer. I hold a master's degree in university education. I have several certificates, one very particular one from the BID [Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo], which certifies me in matters of projects at the Central American level, concretely, in two respects. One is the logical framework, and the other one is the evaluation of projects. And all of that has allowed me to be here now, in this institution, in which, by the way, we are promoting the matter of competences.*

HUNT: Very well. One of the subjects that we are interested in is concepts related to the most efficient strategy for the recruitment of police officers.

VARGAS GARCÍA: *I believe that one of the most interesting strategies is, first of all, that it is a process that takes place at the national level and that it is not a process that excludes. That is to say, a call for applications has to be... Every citizen must be able to participate. The second thing is to establish a requirement of high academic standards. I think that one of the successes behind our police institution is that in order to join the academy and begin training towards becoming a basic police officer, you need a high-school education. That puts a young applicant at 17 or 18 years old, an age where he already makes use of his reason. He is already a person that makes use of his reason, and he is a high-school graduate. So, then, we are level, in that respect, with any university, because in order to gain admission to universities one needs to have a high-school education. That is one strategy, that is, to establish academic requirements in order to join the police. Then, for high-ranking officers, another very important strategy is to have them be college graduates, because that allows the person to have knowledge of several different professional environments, such as engineers, doctors, psychologists. And these people are trained to be police officers, because, really, it is not as if anyone has, from the beginning, most of the time, a vocation for police work. "Look, I want to be a police officer, or chief of the police." In our country, that is not the case. Rather, it is a situation where there exists a need for employment opportunities. But the fact is that in order to become chief—in this case, to become police inspector,*

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*one needs to have a college degree. That makes for a very interesting combination of knowledge between people.*

*Another strategy that I believe is worth taking into account when building a new police corps like ours is to lean on those who know, not just on one or two of them, but on a whole lot of them. When I was assistant director of the academy, we were advised by the United States, by Mexico, Puerto Rico, Chile, Spain, Norway, Sweden. Some other countries may escape me... And that led to meetings. Whenever we had meetings with police officers, because everyone that helped us was a police officer, whenever we had meetings, it was interesting to listen to one point of view, then another one. So, then, I believe that the great strength of the academy comes from its being born from all that great knowledge coming from a lot of experts. And we did not just involve people from our country. Because sometimes one can have experience within one's country, but it is not the same as when people from other countries come over to tell us about their experience. I think this can perhaps amount to a few strategies.*

HUNT: I'd like us to talk about the recruiting programs that you may have helped to organize, programs that you may have been consulted about or that you may have supervised.

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Well, back in 1992, 1993, what we call the la Unidad de Convocatoria y Selección, the Unit of Calls of Application and Selection, was created in the academy. There, five great tests were designed with the advice of international organs and the United Nations. A physical test was designed, a cultural test, a medical test was designed. After that, there is a psycho-technical interview and the... the medical, physical, psycho-technical, cultural test... I can't remember. But there are five tests total. They were tested with a sample, and from then on we began to implement them throughout the training process in the academy. And that has been carried on as time has passed. Obviously, they have been perfected. In the beginning, there were no computer systems, and today, well, there are computer systems that are being perfected along the way. Particularly in psychological tests, we try to look for tests from other countries, and we adapt them to the Salvadorian context. That unit is the one responsible for selecting future police officers. That is to say, I've had great experience, and I have participated in the strengthening of that Unit of Calls for Applications and Selection.*

HUNT: Can you tell me a bit more about how that strategy took shape after the peace treaties [Acuerdos de Paz de Chapultepec]? That is to say, how did you decide on the strategy for police recruitment, on the process?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Well, this is a result, as you said, of the peace treaties, and, wisely enough, the two institutions were separated, because given that, at that point, it all started from scratch, that is to say, without a single police officer, it was necessary to, first, form the academy so that police officers could come out of it, and so that afterwards all the police corps could come out of it, because otherwise it had no reason to exist. I think that several factors were involved there. One is the political will of the government in turn, that is to say, the government in turn had the political will to make that project happen. Secondly, a transitory law that allowed it to obtain the necessary financial resources without major restrictions from what is known as purchase regulations. Rather, purchases were very swift because there were no classrooms; there was nothing. So we were building classrooms. We finished one, and the students would come, and somewhere else another classroom was being built. So*

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*budgetary swiftness was necessary. Although those were government funds, budgetary swiftness was necessary. Another matter was the financial support provided by other countries for the purchase of several things. And the other thing is the support from foreign experts that came over to help us.*

HUNT: Very well. There was an effort to have certain police officers that had been part of the police force retire and to bring in new officers. How did you ensure that you had a good mix of applicants?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Well, the treaty stipulated that the first graduating classes from the academy have a percentage of former members of the security forces and former members of the guerrillas. A lot of people believed that this was going to be a great problem because these were people that had been on opposite sides of a conflict for practically 12 or 15 years, and there was great fear of that situation. I particularly remember that many people said, "Look, how are you going to manage to have them sleep under the same roof?" That is to say, if one of them is a guerrilla member and the other one is a soldier, or one is a former guerrilla member and the other one is a former police officer. But that was an agreement, a percentage of the incoming class. Half came from one side of the conflict and half was from the other one. Those guerrilla members that did not meet the academic requirements were given an accelerated course by academic institutions so that they could enter the academy, and the same thing took place for the members of the security forces. But once in the academy, once they were chosen, I believe that the spirit of the nation prevailed, the spirit of moving forward, of the effort of many people. And although, yes, maybe it's true, those who came from the guerrilla had a stigma compared to the other ones, or maybe the police officers or the soldiers had an aberration for the other ones, but once in the process of training, those things did not have any transcendence; that is to say, there were no situations where a fight broke out, where guerrilla members... No, rather, I think that the interest of the country prevailed. Yes, it's true, as years have gone by, that has at times brought about some inconveniences, but logically, whenever history is being made, one does not know how things will take place. But in the beginning there was a lot of resentment, a lot of tyranny.*

HUNT: So what measures or standards did you follow to evaluate the success of the training programs? What was the level of education at the academy?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Well, the foreign advisors were the ones helping us in that respect, and they were the ones that constantly evaluated our work process. You have to remember that in the beginning, the first graduating classes did not have all the resources. There were not enough weapons to practice with, that is to say, to practice marksmanship. There were not enough books. There were not enough... Classes were very large. There were 50 or 60 students in them. And since we did not have a police, there was a need to get them out. So, those first groups did not receive a rigorous academic training, but this was compensated for by the rigorous examples of police officers presented by the foreigners.*

HUNT: One question, just to be clear. When the academy was opened, did every police officer go through it? Or were the ones that were already police officers...?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *All of them.*

HUNT: All of them?

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VARGAS GARCÍA: *Everyone went through it, which is to say, in order to be a police officer, you have to go through the academy.*

HUNT: And were you ever in contact with the police force that the country had in the transition? There was a police corps here in the middle of the process. Between the time of the peace treaties and...

VARGAS GARCÍA: *No. That's not the way things are. The academy was born, the first graduates come out of it, they were deployed, and they substituted the old police, which was called the National Police [Policía Nacional]. That's when they began to be demobilized. Of course, observers from the United Nations accompanied those graduates. But it was not that there was a transitory police corps to substitute the old police. It was not like that, but rather the new police began to substitute the old one.*

HUNT: Ah, yes. It was my understanding that, as part of ONUSAL [United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador], there were some transition patrols.

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Yes, but they were... It was them who directed them.*

HUNT: OK. Very well.

VARGAS GARCÍA: *But there was no other police corps at any given time.*

HUNT: All right. And how successful were these initial programs that you have mentioned? Or how have they been improved over the years?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Well, let's just say that the population took favorably to their new police, because it arrived with new expectations. And at the time we did not have the crime problems that now belong to a different context. Rather, the country was coming out of an armed conflict, and what people wanted was tranquility, peace. And seeing the new police officer as a person that was going to help them, that was going to solve their security problems... Maybe what has happened over the years is that sometimes, because of different reasons, some officers may have perhaps lost their way. They may have lost the spirit under which the peace treaties were born. And sometimes, politicians, many of them interfere. So politicians begin to mess with the institutions, to rumple them with their opinions, with decrees, with sanctions that are not within the initial spirit of the institution. Sometimes, what is most harmful to the institution is the political actors, really.*

HUNT: What are the principal obstacles that were confronted in attempting to develop a recruiting strategy?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *As far as recruiting goes? Well, the lack of qualified human resources to conduct tests. Since we had to improvise along the way, the different tests were then constructed and put into practice. But we did not have time for feedback, because it was necessary to interview 100 candidates, then another 100, then 300, then another 500. So, there was no stopping, no pause along the way that could allow us to establish substantial improvements in that initial recruitment process. Time constraints really did not allow for that.*

HUNT: And how were those obstacles conquered over the years? In other words, did they sort themselves out or...?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Well, over the years—I don't know how many years, maybe about eight years—the police corps reached a number of police officers sufficiently high, and that is where the academy, through its call for an applications unit, made a stop on the road and began to improve the selection tests that we currently have. Now, under the current administration of President Elías Antonio Saca, it was suggested that we have 3,000 more police officers, because there was a great deficit in the number of police officers, and this is when these new strategies were articulated to make this new selection of personnel.*

HUNT: Could you offer any advice for people that are working on these matters in other countries, advice on how to overcome obstacles in the implementation of these strategies?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *First of all, you have to have higher political support. Without political support, you cannot do the academic part, which is important. Secondly, you cannot work outside of the initial requirements set for those who seek admission, because if you begin to manipulate them, some enter with some requirements, others with other requirements. Whatever is established in the beginning, in the first moment, you must abide by that. Another piece of advice would be that it is not always good to have only police officers within the organization, because you lose the perspective of the nation. Because if there is no one else except police officers meeting, they do not see what is going on in their social surroundings. And that is why it is healthy... And another piece of advice is to have a pluralist academic council. The academy has an academic council constituted by different people from Salvadorian society, where the police have a representative but everyone else is a civilian. That provides feedback to the new police corps on the whole civil context. But if you put together a top level that is constituted exclusively by police officers, you can only think like a police officer. In that case, you do not see the mistakes. And sometimes the most delicate thing is that they cover up among them—the police officers themselves, so that their colleagues don't come across as bad police officers. That is a very bad thing. And the other thing is that the police must be permanently evaluated by the civil society. In the treaties, it was agreed upon that we, as an academy, every year, would have to conduct an evaluation of the Policía Nacional Civil to see how society perceives it.*

HUNT: Do you have any recommendations for people that are trying to design or administer recruitment strategies for a national police force?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Recommendations? I think that there... One would be to invite people from other countries that have already been through that, so that they incur less errors. This country would have to make an effort to invite people that can help them for a year, for two years, I don't know. In order to prevent people... Another one would be to look for people who have not been committed to any past political system. So that they are not politically warped in that way that always, most of the time, is harmful to society. Another one is to prevent that the percentage of former members of the security forces or former members of the guerrilla is greater than that of the new ones. What I'm trying to say is that people who have not had anything to do with a conflict are the ones that should hold a greater percentage of the new police posts available.*

HUNT: So, to limit the amount of police officers who come from...

VARGAS GARCÍA: *From former security forces or guerrilla groups. You have to prevent—in as much as it is possible—those situations, because if you don't, in the long run,*

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*when they reach high-ranking positions, they always have those quarrels. "I'm from a certain side and you're from the other one."*

HUNT: Very interesting. The other kind of function that we would like you to talk about is the matter of training and professionalization of the police forces. Some people have more experience than others in this area. But I'd like to know your opinion, since you've held several different positions, as assistant director and also as chief of studies—is that right? My questions are a bit about helping to develop training programs and professionalization and... Your observations about good ways to go about creating a similar system—could you please describe to us some of the training programs that you have helped design or administer?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Well, among the fabulous training programs that exist—you have to start in the country with the initial base and to take the other students to other countries to get training. The high-ranking officers that we train, some of them went to Spain, some others went to Puerto Rico. They went to academies that had more years of work behind them. They went there because there you had the resources or the conditions that at the time our institution lacked. Because it was going to be in another country, anyway, it is not like it has everything. "Look, come here now, let's start classes, everything is ready for you"—no.*

HUNT: And in that first stage, how many students were trained?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *I think it might have been 200, maybe 150, something like that. But we trained the chiefs. That's what I'm referring to, chiefs. So, chiefs—when you send them to another country and they see what positive things have been done there, that is an experience that they internalize. The other thing, in this sense, in terms of education, is that instructors have to be a mix of civilians and police officers from other countries. But no police officers from that country—that is to say, people that have been police officers—because those people bring with them bad habits from the past. Although... It is not that we are undervaluing anyone. But they have more bad habits than good habits, and that is what they want to bring to the new institution. So the success of our experience is: civilian instructors combined with police officers from other countries. The programs are adjusted, they are corrected over time, and then civilians begin to understand how a police officer thinks. But these police officers that come from abroad really socialize with the nation's society, because these are civilian people and they come from the civilian world. Later, these foreign police officers can leave gradually, and the police officers that are coming out under the new training, those police officers come from a process of selection, and they begin to be the first police instructors, so that they continue the work alongside these civilians.*

HUNT: And how did you choose those that were going to take part in this training process?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *It was an open process, announced nationally, a public call for applications. And academic requirements were established.*

HUNT: And that training was developed over the years, with those people training other people and such... And that training, is it part of the training provided in the academy, or is it only for those in certain ranks among those who are going to be police officers?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *No, it's for everyone. For every rank, basic level and executive level. That's how the strategy was designed.*

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HUNT: Were any efforts made to identify problems that training ought to address?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Yes, because the United Nations had a diagnosis of the national reality.*

HUNT: Could you please explain to me how that evaluation took place? And do you think the evaluation is finished?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Let's say, the evaluation—when it began, the academy was already there. What we had was an annual report of the progress made and the improvements that could be made, but really, the way it was done, I don't know.*

HUNT: Very well. Could you speak a bit more about the greatest deficiencies at the outset of the program in terms of abilities or knowledge?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Well, the biggest deficiencies were that the civilian instructors had never been charged with training a police officer, but rather they had taught university students, so they wanted to implement methodologies similar to university ones, but with the police that cannot be done. Another one is the language barriers in obtaining bibliographical material for the new police, because the United States practically had very little material in Spanish to train a new police corps, and for the most part we relied on Spain, and a very few of the "carabineros" or policemen from Chile, which at the time was a group that was still dealing with the matter of their being a military police. Because General Pinochet [Augusto José Ramón Pinochet Ugarte] was still alive. So a lot of specialized bibliography on the police was lacking. There wasn't any. It is my understanding that there is more of it today, but that is going to be a difficulty in any country, the bibliography, because it is not in their language. Teaching becomes very difficult for someone that does not have a book or a reference guide. So sometimes one must begin to write them, but one writes them based on what little experience one has as a country. Because what is most enriching is the experience of others, but the book should be available. For instance, just to give you an example, teaching road traffic, teaching criminal justice... "Look, this is the textbook that is used in five countries. This is the first, second, third..." "Oh, I see. Which one do you think is the best one?" We had none of that.*

HUNT: Nowadays, do you think that the needs are the same, or do you think they have changed?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *No, they have changed. They have changed. I think the needs now are to make the youth feel like we are building a career for life, for 35 years, and that it's not just a way of earning money to come out of their precarious economic situation. Another condition that is lacking, that is barely there: there is no longer any cultural exchange with other police forces. This is a mistake stemming from a belief held by the international cooperation mechanism, the belief that after five years, eight years, "God help you, I have go and help someone else." But if you spend five years without any foreign counseling, you become outdated, because with time, the people that are in our country, day to day, they do not see the new things that are going on around the world. So, I would say that that is a weakness that our current work system has, that we have very scarce foreign counseling in terms of police matters. Another weakness is that, to put it one way, many of our current instructors only work in academia, and they do not have any contact with the college education that is given in other parts of our country. Another weakness is the lack of a budget to send people abroad in order to train them. That is a great weakness. We cannot afford to do that.*

HUNT: Could you tell me a bit more about what was in the training curriculum in that first stage, perhaps comparing it to what is in the current curriculum?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Well, basically, the curriculum had four large components. One, the police component, with all the police subjects. The other one was the humanities part, with great emphasis on human rights. The United Nations worked very closely in that process of the training program. Another component is what we used to call the physical area, the part with physical training, the matter of personal defense. A fourth area was the judicial subject, all the legal components. And a fifth one is what we called the technical-professional component, which consists of a review of grammar, of how to compose sentences, spelling, first aid. And currently, the new modality that we are working with is the matter of competences. We're just beginning on that, because, really, we are beginning a process that now only has three large areas: one is the humanities area, another one is the police area, and the other one is the judicial area, but with this discussion about how information technologies have to be one of the tools, one of the most important auxiliaries, so that it is no longer necessary to have the youth always stuck in the classroom, but rather to have him go to his community, to do research, and to have his work graded via the Internet.*

HUNT: Has there been any follow up to those students, the first ones to graduate?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Very little. It wasn't until last year that what we called the School for Retraining [Escuela de Readiestramiento] was created, which is led by the assistant director, and the intention there is to bring back those who were trained in the beginning. Such is the existing process of updating and actualization within the curricular framework. But before, prior efforts, there was very little of that. Some people left 10 years ago, and they have never returned to the academy to perfect their police skills.*

HUNT: Yes, interesting. And has there been an effort to adapt the training process to the different groups around? Was there a difference, say, at the time that the former guerrilla members were entering the academy compared with the time when the military people were entering? Or has it been the same training?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *No, in the beginning, it was the same. The same. The academy treated everyone the same.*

HUNT: And you mentioned before that before aspiring to the post of police officer, you need to have a high school diploma...

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Yes.*

HUNT: But you need a higher education for the high-ranking posts...

VARGAS GARCÍA: *A college degree.*

HUNT: Yes, a college degree. Is there a way for someone entering the police ranks to find support to continue studying if there's an interest in reaching the high-ranking posts?

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VARGAS GARCÍA: *Yes, the police grants leaves of absence to continue with college education, but there is no scholarship, there is no financial support. But time is conceded by the institution, by the police, so they can opt for a college degree.*

HUNT: And is there a way to go up the ranks without entering college? Or is that the only way one can train for the executive level?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Well, let's see. It's the only way. To begin training for the position of supervisor, it's the only way.*

HUNT: Has the work been divided into stages in any of the training programs that you have worked with?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Yes. Some of them had X amount of months were they had to be present, and some had more months of practice outside of the police. In fact, the first graduating classes, not all of them finished their process, but rather they left in the middle of their training and went on to start taking over police duties. After that, they came back and they finished the months they had left in their training.*

HUNT: And the academy here, in El Salvador, is it the only one in the whole country?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *It's the only one.*

HUNT: Right. So the training that the police from all over the country receive, the police from El Salvador, they receive it at the academy.

VARGAS GARCÍA: *It's the same thing. Yes.*

HUNT: Very interesting. Thinking about other programs, what part of the objectives that were set for them were met? That is to say, reflecting on—

VARGAS GARCÍA: *I think that six years after work began, most of the major work goals had been met.*

HUNT: In what respect were they most successful?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *First of all, there were no deaths between the two sides of the first graduating classes. I think that was the greatest success. The other success was substituting the old security forces without shedding blood. Today, looking back on it, that was very valuable.*

HUNT: And as time goes by, how has the training been evaluated in the academy?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *As I was saying, every year the police is evaluated, and based on that evaluation, on that diagnosis, it serves as a component to improve our training processes. That's one way. The other one is: the guys, when they graduate, they go to the police for three months to complete their training runs, so when they come back from their training runs we give them a questionnaire and we do a focus group to get feedback on those that have already left for the police, on what they are seeing outside. And this has allowed us to have a constant improvement in our training process.*

HUNT: Can you tell me a bit more about the results of those studies, of those evaluations?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *The first one was to change the curriculum to the one we have this year. That was the first achievement. That is to say, we've already changed the curriculum on the basic level and the executive level of the supervisors, based on those studies and in consulting work we had from the Spanish government.*

HUNT: Can you give me a bit more detail about what has been changed? What was the motivation to change it??

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Well, we changed the number of hours, the amount of hours in class that are given every day, the number of months. The last graduating classes are leaving with eight months of theoretical training and three months of practical training, and they will have—the two new classes that we have—nine months of theoretical training and three of practical training. Every student has a folder on the matter of competences, and we aspire to assess them as either apt or not apt; that is to say, he's there, he has the knowledge, the abilities, the aptitudes, and if he's there, he's apt, and if he doesn't have that, therefore he is not apt. It's no longer like in that situation where you give out a C, a B, or an A, you see—"Look, and why is it that this police officer got an A and this other one got a B?" You cannot explain that type of difference.*

HUNT: Thinking about the kinds of instructors, the relationship between instructors and students, the curriculum, the place and the time of the training processes, the follow-up to them, etc., can you give me some parameters towards improving the development of the programs?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Parameters? The case, for instance, of the tests we conduct: they always have to be measured as they are at the international level. Physical training, for instance: when we conduct the physical training test, we work with international parameters. In psychological tests, the same thing; we work based on international parameters. So one has to know what the parameters of other countries are and to adapt them to our context, but not to set those parameters ourselves and to believe that ours are better. No. It is necessary to compare ourselves with someone else.*

HUNT: Often, the programs preferred by the international community are too costly for the budgets of many of these countries and communities. In regards to this matter that we are now discussing, can you think of one or two suggestions to reduce costs?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *When you send people over, at least as far as my experience here goes—everyone is told where to go. "You go look for your house, you go look for yours." International aid pays you. There should be shared facilities for all the contributors. And they should live there, all of them under the same standard, and that would save a great amount of money. The other thing—I think that today, it's cheaper with the Internet. That is to say, before, that did not exist in our experience. When I retired from the academy, nobody had a computer back then, and now information technology translates into a lot of savings. Perhaps a stay, which before was a two-year affair: today it may be only a year long, and through the Internet—videoconferencing, chat rooms, and all of that—today you can save on a great amount of expenses. So, if before it took two years, today it may only take one year, but the person that stays in the country, that wants to get help, he is in daily communication with his mentor, his tutor or his advising police officer. That makes things vastly easier. More investment should be made in improving communication systems for videoconferences.*

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HUNT: Yes. If you were writing a manual for police training and training of security forces, what subjects do you think would be most important and most worthy of being included in the curriculum?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Among the most important subjects you have the social aspect, community police; that is to say, knowing how to behave in the community where the police officer lives or where he is going to complete his duties, because they have a double role. One is the community where he lives as one more civilian, but the other one is his role in the community where he is going to lend his services. So I would put a lot of emphasis on community police.*

*Another one is the emphasis on the social relations that he must have with the community that he goes to; that is, what his relationship with the higher authorities should be like and what his relationship with lesser authorities should be like and what his transversal affairs should be like.*

*If it's a country that has suffered in terms of human rights, a lot of emphasis should be placed on that. But you have to be a bit careful there, because there, in regards to the matter of human rights, people nowadays believe that if a police officer is asking someone for their documents, the officer is already violating their human rights. That is, it has been taken to a very dangerous dimension whereby the police officer is no longer seen as a figure of respect—quite the contrary: "You can't do anything to me!" So, the citizen has acquired an attitude, a bit...very unsightly in relation to that. So, that would be a third component, as long as human rights are respected.*

*The other thing is the written design of police practices. There is none. For instance, when I was there, there was none. So it turns out people would make them up for themselves, and everyone would make their best effort, but it was not documented. So it is important to have a—just like universities in the United States, some of them.*

*Case management. A large quantity of police cases has to be designed so that people apply them, discuss them, mostly the higher level. People at high-level posts should focus on a case system. Practical cases.*

HUNT: And those cases, that is, that manner of teaching, has it been developed here in this country over the years?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *In the police? No. We are doing it, with this new effort that we are undertaking. We are beginning to write up cases. We would hope that the effort takes two or three years in order to have a series of identified cases, films shot at the national level, so that they work as feedback for the students.*

HUNT: And the curriculum that you use, has it been developed by you? That is, since, as you told me, there was a lack of materials in the beginning...

VARGAS GARCÍA: *What we did last year was to gather information about police officers and about those that were going to participate in practice runs. We were doing that for almost 11 months. We undertook an initial effort with internal personnel. We asked Spain for advice last year, so that they came to see it, to see how we were doing it. Why Spain? Because Spain was one of the countries that helped us the first time around. So that was an excellent reference point. Besides that, we had the necessary contacts through the embassy. They came, they saw what we were doing, they made observations. They'll be back this year, in January and*

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*February. With them, we fine-tuned the work, and that is the curriculum that was authorized by the academic council. That was the process that we followed: field work, information analysis, design of the preliminary model, obtaining foreign consulting, validating it with foreign consultants, and then obtaining authorization from the academic council.*

HUNT: Yes, very interesting. Well, another subject of special interest to us is whether you have experience in the fusion and integration of security forces or of different police services into one single, coherent police unit. We have spoken about the peace treaties and the training of police officers from the National Police, who bear traits from what used to be the former national police, and also from the guerrilla. Perhaps you can tell us a bit more about that matter.

VARGAS GARCÍA: *I may not understand your question. What is it that you want to know?*

HUNT: In other words, whether you have ever helped to fuse together different police organizations or militias into one single unit.

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Yes, I have. As I was telling you, we've made police officers out of former guerrilla members and that kind of thing, out of former soldiers. We did it by means of a very interesting kind of psychological work. The psychology unit played a preponderant role. Cases were given follow-up. There were people that would wake up in the middle of the night because they would hear bombs going off. But yes, I have taken part in that process of integration.*

HUNT: How much leeway did you and your team have in designing this procedure?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *We were free to do as we wanted. We had the necessary political support. It was an effort supported by many people.*

HUNT: And how much freedom did you have? In the sense that there were certain things that were part of the peace treaties with—

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Ah, no. In that respect, it was in line with the peace treaties. That was the road drawn for us, let's call it that. We never strayed from that road. But other than that, there was a lot of freedom. But the thing is, as I was mentioning, the opinion of outside police officers was very valuable. So, you had an opinion—well, what do we do then? So, between all of us, there wasn't always a consensus, but during the discussion of ideas it was very enriching in terms of turning out a better product.*

HUNT: Can you tell me a bit more about who was part of that process? That is to say, was it the government, the community, the...?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Well, the first player was the government. At the time, there was a minister of the presidency [ministro de la presidencia]. He was, shall we say, the direct link that we had with ourselves. The political parties also contributed with their representatives to the first academic council. After that, the community, the United Nations, the cooperating countries, as I mentioned before: Spain, the United States, Mexico, Chile, Norway, Switzerland... Those were the ones that helped us.*

HUNT: And how did you come to an agreement on the best strategy to follow?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *What would an agreement be like? Well, the first thing is that the current government must have the will to do it. Because if the international community wants to impose it, that is a failure. That does not last in the long run. So, the first thing is that the current government of that country has the will. If the government has the will, the international community has to evaluate whether the players that surround the government are going to support it, because here, although the government had the will, the military had to be persuaded, strong-armed, whatever you want to call it, because had they not wanted to do it, the new treaty on the new security system would not have worked. That is to say, that has to be clear. So, first, the current government and the players around it, in this case the economic capital, the social actors... "Look, you, are you going to support the government? The government has a decision to make. What do you think?" "Oh, OK." With those two things, you can already move on to the political part—well, to the political figures. "Look, opposition politician, are you going to boycott this? Yes or no? No, no, look..." "Oh, OK." Once I've made the internal diagnosis and determined that the conditions or the desire to implement change is there, all right, now you can come over and help us. But if that does not happen, the rest is a bad investment.*

HUNT: Was there an effort to exclude some people that had been part of the groups that—?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Yes, of course. If they did not meet the requirements or if they had a criminal record, that was it. That was it for them.*

HUNT: And how did you determine who had criminal records? That is, in the sense that certain—

VARGAS GARCÍA: *We must remember that the last security force also had its information database, or the guerrilla also had its information database. That is to say, look, that one, the soldier, that one cannot take part, notice that that one committed homicide. So, yes, there was a process of purification.*

HUNT: Can you explain to me a bit more what that process was like?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *It took place through this call for the applications and selection unit, and it investigated whether there was a problem either with the last security force or with the guerrilla, because it wasn't as if we're going to take in a guerrilla member that had placed a bomb in someone's house. So, there was information. Maybe not all of it was trustworthy. Because certainly more than one slipped through, people who... I can't remember how many; we might have interviewed about 50,000 throughout many years. You have to keep in mind that it was an initial process and it had noticeable imperfections. But we can see the history of the last few years. We haven't had anyone, like, crazy, no one that killed 10 people, who was a former soldier and was crazy and killed people. No, that has not happened.*

HUNT: And what were the pros and the cons of this approach?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Currently, in this present moment, one looks more towards the pros. With time, the cons start to emerge. And one con is that in the higher levels, they are still divided. They still think sometimes in a certain way, the way they were trained, or in another way. But that's normal. They were older people. The ones that were chiefs or supervisors were already past 23 years old, which is to say, they already had their personalities completely molded. They had their life goals*

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*firmly set. So regardless of how much effort you made over two years of work, or over a year of work, you will not change someone who is 23. We did not achieve that.*

HUNT: This question is partly based on what we talked about before, and maybe it is a bit repetitive, but perhaps you can contribute something else. Let's say that, generally speaking, the integration usually implies some sort of retraining of former security force members, and frequently it is necessary to help recruits understand the difference between the rules and behavior of the military or the guerrilla and the functions of the civilian police. Did you develop within your mission training programs of this sort? And can you explain to me in a bit more detail, how was—?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Maybe we as an academy did not, but the army and the guerrilla did it. That is to say, they prepared their people before they entered the academy. For that matter, the army selected among its best members those who could best represent it, and at that point they subjected those people to a process of induction. Same thing with the guerrilla. They had thousands of men, but they did not send everyone; rather, they chose the best representatives, and the national university [Universidad de El Salvador] or other institutions gave them a training process so that they would come to us, to the academy, with advanced knowledge.*

HUNT: Ah, very interesting.

VARGAS GARCÍA: *That is to say, the two figures that had an interest in the success of this, they took care to make these kinds of efforts.*

HUNT: And what do you think were the most significant achievements of having this training before entering the academy?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *That they didn't fight once they were in it!? It did not transcend—in other words, there may have been brawls—but among 17-year-olds, that's normal. It never developed into a larger matter.*

HUNT: Well, as you were telling me, they did not kill each other, but—

VARGAS GARCÍA: *No. We did not have a single death!*

HUNT: Did you take explicit measures to reduce the tensions between the different sides?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *I think it was the will to work that the people had. There was nothing written down, nothing very... There were internal rules, but they weren't really written ones. But I think it was the fact that the people, the instructors, talked to them. That is to say, that they made them see that it was a national project, that they got them to see why they were there, where they were going... I think it was mostly an academic task that greatly helped towards preventing that.*

HUNT: Do you remember a story or something that really...? Because it is something very particular, no?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Yes. I remember many stories. For instance, sometimes the food would not sit well with the guys. We once had, at a certain moment—the largest number of students we had was 2,300. So sometimes the food would turn out bad, or it*

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*would not sit well with them and we had a diarrhea problem, a serious problem. So we found out that someone who grew impatient with a certain sector—I won't mention names—he allowed the people from his sector to use the bathrooms before the people from other sectors. The diarrhea problem we had was large, to the point that we had to—the bathrooms were not enough, and we had to take them outside and...they dug a pit.*

HUNT: [Laughter.]

VARGAS GARCÍA: Yes, yes, it's true.

HUNT: Everyone was taken down to the same level, huh?

VARGAS GARCÍA: Yes. I went in there. Since some of them had to leave, I—well, then! But this is actually true!

HUNT: Among the police forces themselves, has any institution been created to ease the tension among the incoming recruits and the different units? In other words, has there been a formal process, or...?

VARGAS GARCÍA: Within the police? I don't think so.

HUNT: And within the integrated forces, how did you handle promotions ["promociones"]?

VARGAS GARCÍA: How to handle them? Well, what we call "promociones..." Let's say someone comes into the academy in July. That is a certain class, and until he graduates, he belongs to that graduating class, to that "promoción." The one that comes into the academy in August is another class; that is to say, the point in time at which someone comes in determines the class to which they belong.

HUNT: Very interesting. And has any oversight mechanism been implemented to guarantee that the system does not favor any one side, particularly towards the beginning?

VARGAS GARCÍA: Well, at the higher level, what we did was... I can't remember what the percentages were. I think it was 30% army, 30% guerrilla, and 40% civilian. You have to agree on the percentages, and to make sure that those percentages are balanced, and that there is always a civilian component: in other words, those who did not take part in either of the two sides. After that, nowadays, that no longer has a reason to be. That was towards the beginning.

HUNT: Has the human resource system been isolated from pressures to designate people without regard for the parameters established beforehand?

VARGAS GARCÍA: Maybe I'm not understanding you?

HUNT: In other words, have measures been taken to isolate the human resources system so that they will not be pressured from, say, one side or the other, pressured to promote one side more than the other?

VARGAS GARCÍA: Let's see, in the academy... Human resources has not had a major problem, but the police has. Because, as you were saying, in terms of promotions and salaries and everything, then yes. And remember that we as an academy are very little. There are about 500 administrative staff members, plus

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*the students, 2,000. We're about 2,500 in all, and the police have 20,000 people, 22,000 counting the administrative staff. So that is bound to happen, like in any other institution.*

HUNT: Have you tried to assess the success of the integration in a formal manner?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *No, not in a formal manner.*

HUNT: Have voluntary retirement packets been used in an attempt to balance the number of people from the different groups that make up the force?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *No, that hasn't been done either.*

HUNT: Thinking about these efforts, which ones would you say were the principal obstacles in developing an effective strategy for the integration or fusion of services?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *The principal obstacle is the hate or the resentment that exists between one side and another one. How bad the emotional wounds were, the psychological wounds that each side caused. After that, the leaders of each side—because if the leaders keep on with that mentality of: "No, that is your enemy, don't listen to him—" The leaders have a lot of influence, the heads. That is sometimes a danger, the kind of leaders that those sides of the conflict have, those sides that eventually sit down together, those sides that have to be one and the same.*

HUNT: Could you offer any advice on how to overcome obstacles in these cases?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *To get rid of the negative leaders. How can you get rid of them? Because by taking down the head person and putting other leaders in his place, those leaders are the ones who start making the people below them see the new way of being able to work. And perhaps another piece of advice is to take to those places people that can talk about these experiences. Good experiences and not-so-good experiences. I'm not saying that those are bad experiences, because sometimes it is very easy to say, in retrospect, "Ah, this leader was a bad one," and all of that, but one was not in that person's shoes when he had to make certain decisions. So there are good experiences and not-so-good experiences. I would describe them under that rubric.*

HUNT: Do you have any recommendations for those that are trying to design or administer strategies of integration or fusion for national police forces in other countries?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Yes. One recommendation is that young people should be the ones to manage the institutions, because young people are always the ones who have the desire to improve, the enthusiasm... Not to take in any older people. And older people, it is not about spurning them, but the thing is they are too molded, too—and they want the young people to think the way they do, and today, with all the technological development that the world has had, the young people think in a completely different way. So it is always good to count with the highest dosage of youth possible in these types of processes.*

HUNT: Generally speaking, one of the most important tasks in building police services is strengthening its internal administration—that is, usually, the central elements, including promotion systems or disciplinary systems, registrar systems,

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accounting systems. Do you have any experience working with internal administration?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Yes, because when I was assistant director, I looked after the disciplinary aspect. That is to say, the whole set of disciplinary rules went through my office. I also managed the whole process of recruitment of new administrative staff for general services, maintenance. And currently, in the post I hold right now, I'm in charge of the selection and the proposals of prospective instructors. And also, previously, I was in charge of the part about managing ammunition and arms controls.*

HUNT: What were the most significant administrative challenges that you and the police faced?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Well, the people hired to build the facilities, the classrooms, the dormitories, they did not meet their deadlines. Then there was the aspect of financial funds, which were sometimes not available on time. The other thing is the pressure put on us to train police officers who had to—maybe the process was going to be seven months long, and in five months we had to have them ready, because it was an urgent matter, because certain political deadlines had to be met. So the training time was an obstacle; it was very short. But it is difficult to measure it. That is to say, to measure how much of it was good, how much of it was bad—I really did not...*

HUNT: And in the beginning, what did you do to ensure that the police officers that were training stuck to the goals, the objectives, the fixed standards set for them? In other words, was there a process where you—?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *You mean once they were police officers?*

HUNT: Yes.

VARGAS GARCÍA: *No, there was none of that. In other words, it was a matter of good will. We even ran around looking for facilities to deploy the police. "Look out for its arrival in... in Santa Ana." "Ah! Start searching for facilities!" We had to paint in a hurry, to take the furnishings there; the sleeping cabins, the police equipment, the weapons wouldn't be ready on time; the ammunition would not be ready. Where are the police officers going to take their meals? A great amount of...*

HUNT: This is the second part of the interview with Mr. Carlos Humberto Vargas [García]. Mr, Vargas, we've talked about your experience in several different posts. Now I'd like to talk to you about the greatest current challenges in building or reforming an institution. It is very rare to find a situation where the personnel has all the skills necessary for completing its work in an effective manner and for supporting the process of change. In an imperfect world like this one, what advice would you offer in terms of the sequence of steps that must be taken in reforms like this?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *I think that—as I mentioned in the first part, the first step is: the current government has to make the political decision to conduct a radical change in the training of police officers, in the creation of police forces. The second component is to combine forces with other figures close to and opposed to the government, so that they join in on this, without imposing ideas, but rather with an eye towards dialogue and towards trying to persuade him of what is right for the country. Thirdly, to seek out an internal tax for the recollection of funds. Fourthly, to look*

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*for international aid, but in a way that the aid comes in with no conditions attached. That is to say, nobody from abroad should come and impose anything to me. And that can be accomplished by seeking that tax that I'm talking about. Look—in other words—yes, I need you to help me, but the fact that you give me 20 million doesn't mean that you can come and impose something I don't agree with, yes? My model: I'd like to be helped, but—to have money, because if the country doesn't have any money, it allows anything to come into play, and after that it's all a failure, because foreign countries have the bad habit of trying things out in countries with no experience. It is a very bad thing. So the country involved, the country interested in this, has to have a special tax so that that happens. After that, to invite, as I was saying, the international community, but several of them and from different schools of thought, so that the country prospers with the improvement of everything that will feed back into it. Later on, to continue to work with a fiscal policy, so that the tax grows in order that the police or the training always has enough money. After the first few years, to seek once again the support of the international community, but now towards specializations within the police, because what has happened here in the academy is that in terms of specializations, the police only looked for one supporter. And that is where the mistake lies. Because, in that case—let's say I belong to the crowd control unit and I go looking for support in Canada and nowhere else. Ah, well, Canada comes with its best intentions and goodwill; it helps to form that crowd control unit, but it forms them in their liking, no? That is to say, when you go out looking to work in specialized areas like drug trafficking and all of that, you need to look for three or four countries. You go there and you see. "Send me two experts, three experts. You, send me..." "Well, what can we do?" That is to say, in the future they do not need to be isolated efforts, but rather, they need to be supported and under the supervision of the international community.*

HUNT: In your opinion, what kind of allies from other institutions in the political sphere, in the community, are essential for the success of reforms of this kind?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *What kind of external allies?*

HUNT: Or internal, depending on the situation.

VARGAS GARCÍA: *I've already mentioned the military. If it's a country that has always been under a military regime, the military. You have to talk to them.*

HUNT: Do you have any suggestions about the best way to secure the support of these people? Because sometimes it can be a little difficult.

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Well, let's just say that there are different strategies. One could be to compensate them for voluntary retirement. But the compensation needs to be sufficient for them to develop outside of the environment they've always been in. Another strategy could be the generational change of guard of that same institution. In other words, to retire those that have been at the front of the organization, serving the country, because they, too—again, it is easy to judge history when history has already passed, but it is not the same thing as being there when the moment was present. Another suggestion is to send those people to other countries that have already lived through that, so that they get to know things, to see what happened. Because sometimes one does not believe in something if one does not see it. He might be stubborn, foolish, and everything, but we will take them there to see, to get to know things—give him a month, I*

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*don't know; just go, so that when he comes back he is convinced. That is to say, I have to think about my country in terms of the future.*

HUNT: Aside from those that received training abroad, was there any contact of that kind between former military members and people from the Salvadorian government?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *I don't really know.*

HUNT: It would be interesting to know it, no?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Yes. I don't know, but I could only talk about our own case.*

HUNT: Yes. During your time working in the construction of police services through the academy, have you or anyone else faced an insurmountable obstacle in implementing a certain initiative due to the inability of other parts of the government, or due to the lack of cooperation from the community? In other words, have you faced any obstacles that you have not been able to overcome?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *You know, as far as that is concerned—a matter of luck. God has been with me during both of my terms here. When I was assistant director, believe me, I had the support of many foreign, international aid agents. They were very valuable. Also, the support of the general director, which was also very valuable. And currently I have the support of my only supervisor, the director, and I've had the support of supervisors that are now under my command, the support to propel this shift in strategy that we are having. And perhaps money is the catch. There are not enough financial resources around to do what one wants to do.*

HUNT: Yes, of course.

VARGAS GARCÍA: *But, let's say, a lack of support—I have not experienced it during my two working periods within the institution.*

HUNT: Would you say that there was a collapse in the discipline or the performance of the police during the reform process?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *If I look at it throughout a period of time, no, there was no collapse. But at this time, the police is going through a serious disciplinary problem. And the thing is, the police officer is losing that natural closeness to people that he must have. People are now sensing that the police officer is too temperamental, that he is too aggressive. But that's logical. Before, the police did not have to deal with the amount of crimes that the country now has. So it seems that we once again need to sit down and see what needs to be done as far as the educational part goes—through online courses, I don't know. But reminding the basic police officer, the one walking around, the one that has contact with the citizenry, that he is someone that should be reached, not an enemy of the citizen, that's an effort that needs to be made.*

HUNT: Do you know about any innovations, any noteworthy experiments, in conducting a reform process?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *At the national level? Well, maybe what the current government is doing, which is the solidarity network FOSALUD [Fondo Solidario para la Salud]; those are initiatives that are very, very interesting, that have nothing to do with us. But yes, it is very admirable, that kind of new initiative.*

HUNT: And out of what you all did during the reform process, during the creation of the academy—that is, it was really an experiment, in other words, something that was being done for the first time.

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Yes, never, in the whole world. There was nothing like that in the world, and it is the most successful United Nations experiment. It has nothing else like it.*

HUNT: Do you know if there are any other countries that have tried to do something similar to what you—?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Nicaragua, Guatemala, but it is not the same. Our process is a lot better.*

HUNT: Why do you think you were successful in ways that other countries were not?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *It was a matter of how the initial agreement was forged. That's where the key is, to start off with a good agreement.*

HUNT: Well, our program intends to help citizens and those in charge of public policy to build their own police services with the participation of the United Nations or with international cooperation, and without it as well. However, the relationships within the international organizations or between the contributing countries sometimes affect the ability of people like you to perform your function well. And sometimes international aid produces its own problems and difficulties. I'd like to talk to you about this matter. Do you have any advice about how to improve the relationship between contributing countries and recipient countries?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Yes. In the first place, they have to talk clearly among themselves about what their interests in that country are, because otherwise we are dealing with hidden agendas. So, I am here thinking one thing, and that may not be true. So, perhaps: "Well, why do you want to help out here?" "Look, I have these economic goals, I have this political objective and I have this, this and that. What about you?" To be a little more honest, really, because being good does not make the donating countries into some kind of god, but rather, they respond to very specific interests linked to their foreign policy. So I believe that if donating countries are, in this sense, a bit more transparent among themselves, the results can be faster and at a lower cost.*

HUNT: In your opinion, are there two or three errors that you frequently see in the way in which donating countries and international organizations such as the United Nations handle the relations with the personnel and the politics of the host country?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Yes, there are several mistakes. One could be the ostentation with which those that come from other countries live in relation to the country in which they are working. Sometimes, that opens up a relatively dangerous floodgate for people from lower classes. Another thing is that it is not always clear, from the beginning, how long the help will last. Rather: "Look, we think that..." Or: "Don't worry, there will be an extension." Time is a variable that sometimes plays a very delicate role. Those two things, I think.*

HUNT: Could you tell me a story of success or failure related to an experience of working with the United Nations or with a—?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *A cooperating country?*

HUNT: —a cooperating country?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Well, I'll tell you about ICITAP [International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program]; that's your country. I can't remember if it was in Los Angeles [California] or San Antonio [Texas]. Since I was a civilian and since it was the first time I was going around getting to know police academies, I wanted to go out on patrol, but the government wouldn't let me, because that was not included in the program that was given to me. But I wanted to ride in there, in a police car, and have contact and spend time with the police officers. So, at one of those two, I can't remember which one it was, I was forced to sign a letter stating that they were not responsible for my life if something were to happen to me during the patrolling, but I insisted on having—on going through that experience, because if you only read books or go to meetings—you can't get from meetings; you have to go out to the field and make contact. They made me sign something, that is, if anything happened to me, the government of the United States was only responsible for sending me back in a coffin. So I went around patrolling with police officers, and I had contact with citizens.*

HUNT: And do you think that that was something that—?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Yes, yes. It was very important.*

HUNT: —something that has helped you a lot?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Yes. The thing is... The thing is, you have to have contact with the citizen, and see how the real police officer from the streets behaves.*

HUNT: In your line of work, is there an aspect of the administrative policy of the United Nations or of any donating countries that you believe works better today than before?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *The respect shown to the countries might be something that has improved. The thing is that since today the media are so open, we no longer see the United Nations as a savior. No. It is an organization... But today you can go on the Internet and look up anyone's CV. "Well, and who is this?" "Someone from the United Nations..." Before, no. "Ah, someone from the United Nations is coming" "Ah!" Not today. Communication is—you can even ask for information about people. And it's there, on the Internet.*

HUNT: If the United Nations or the donating countries were involved in attempts to reconstruct police services, what would be the most significant challenges that the police force would have to face once the United Nations or these countries leave?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *The lack of financial resources if the necessary tax that I mentioned before has not been created. That is, once they leave, they will not have the same kind of resources. Because they may leave the cars behind, yes, but they don't leave any money for gas, for replacement parts; they don't leave trained mechanics. The short lifespan of the equipment comes to a conclusion. And that whole thing about "leaving" is an inappropriate word. We should look for another one. Rather, it's like when you say, "Today, I am going on vacation for two years, but we will be in touch." So, the United Nations should create a follow-up program, using information technology. A follow-up program. It's not like you can just say, "I'm leaving." "Ah! United Nations is gone..." Because that opens up a*

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*gap between those that have been in favor of the project and those that have been against it. So those that have been opposed come, and they begin to push against those that have been in favor in order to regain positions that are sometimes not in the interest of the country.*

HUNT: Do you think that something can be done to prevent, or at least to prepare for these challenges and these problems?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Yes, a lot can be done. Yes.*

HUNT: Do you have any examples of something that was done knowing that the United Nations were going to leave eventually, something done to prepare the country to take charge of things?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *I think that what was most helpful was that when United Nations left, the our country's two greatest political contenders understood that there was no way back, and that, for better or worse, we were in a process of social coexistence, a process that we were better off pushing forward rather than backtracking on it. But there it is a matter of leadership, of how leaders from one side and leaders from the other side see the situation.*

HUNT: Could you tell me a story about a problem that you, as locals, solved without external help?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Let's see, problems, without foreign aid...*

HUNT: Say, during the transition.

VARGAS GARCÍA: *Yes, in the beginning. Well, the construction of things, we did that without foreign consulting, the construction of classrooms and dormitories. That we did alone, the whole physical part of that concept.*

HUNT: Well, we are getting close to the end. I wanted to thank you very much for your time and your dedication to this interview. I have one more question. If you had to write a manual for people that are charged with building police units in problematic contexts, what subjects would you deem most important?

VARGAS GARCÍA: *A manual? Well, first, I would have to have what we call social coexistence, to put it there in the context of what was done towards making that social coexistence a positive one and what was left undone, thus contributing to that not taking place.*

*Another, second aspect would be to explain that not everything is written straightforwardly in the creation of a new security forces. One has to improvise a lot, but that topic of improvisation is where the foreign consulting must come into play, so that the national decisions that one takes are based on listening to someone else, because not everything is written down. Sometimes this can get twisted fast due to several variables of a political nature, and decision-making then becomes a very delicate affair.*

*Another thing that should be included is that there must be an understanding of what a gender effort is. There have to be men and women taking part in the effort. There shouldn't be just men or just women leading the effort. And that gender factor in our countries takes a lot of energy, to put it on the table, on the working table. But the gender aspect is al so most important.*

*That manual should also mention strategies on how to relate with the foreign community that comes to one's country. Because everyone acts differently. And I'll tell you an anecdote. We were in one of—at the time, we had to meet frequently with the foreign personnel. And so, sometimes, we had working lunches. In our country, it is customary to have lunch and keep on working, talking. But in one of these lunches we were with the Swedes, and the Swedes were irked because for them it was a matter of: "No, look, lunch, I can't work during lunch." And they got up. So, I think that the manual should include information on how to relate to the international community, because nobody explains those things to us. And every person from every country has his or her own ways. And that happened to me with them! After that we were very good—professional people working with one another.*

HUNT: Well, Mr. Vargas...

VARGAS GARCÍA: OK, it's been a pleasure.

HUNT: Thank you very much.