

To: GES

From: BW

Re: EL SALVADOR TASK FORCE

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss what the Task Force will (and should) do, how it will do it, and when it will do it.

As the father of the whole idea, you will doubtless have much to contribute.

The following is a discussion of what I think the Task Force can reasonably do; and a reminder about recent events in El Salvador.

Summary

What should be the mandate?

- o to gather information upon which changes in U.S. policy towards El Salvador might be based.

When should it report?

- o no later than the end of February.

With what issues should it deal?

- o the murder of the Jesuits and the subsequent investigation.

- o the context in which the murder of the Jesuits occurred:

 - history of death squad activity (including involvement of military and participation by ARENA);

--church-military relations;

--breakdown of peace talks and subsequent FMLN offensive.

o prospects for renewing negotiations.

Discussion

1. In plain English, the purpose of the group should be to use the break between sessions of Congress to gather as much information as possible about certain recent events in El Salvador, to organize that information, and to make a one time report to the leadership and to the relevant House Committees when Congress re-convenes.
2. Given the size and diversity of the task force, a comprehensive policy statement is not a practical objective and should not be identified as a goal. The Task Force should not spend its time debating the merits or demerits of U.S. military aid, but it should make it clear--whether dealing with the Administration or El Salvador--that justice in the Jesuits case will have a lot to do with Congressional attitudes on military aid.
3. Although the task force has not been established to articulate policy, it can, nevertheless, influence policy. Conclusions, based on fact, about the progress of the investigation into the Jesuits case, about the relationship of that case to other cases, and about the role of ARENA and the military in death squad activity could influence opinions about the appropriate amounts and conditions attached to military aid.

In addition, by asking serious questions about past crimes, the Task Force may help prevent future ones.
4. It is important to recognize that one of the reasons Salvadoran policy has not worked is that Members of Congress have

been insufficiently persistent and insufficiently precise in asking questions. We get told an investigation is being conducted and we go away. But who is conducting the investigation? From whom have statements been taken? What have those statements revealed? What does the physical evidence indicate? Is the person in charge of the investigation someone in whom we can have confidence? How does the pattern in one case--of killings, "an investigation" and a coverup--compare to the pattern in others? What specific actions has the U.S. taken to encourage a real investigation?

5. Above all, what does the U.S. government really know?

In 1981 and 1982, we were told repeatedly that the U.S. didn't know who was behind the death squads. The reason is that we had a policy of not trying to find out.

That changed in 1983, and by the end of the year, Vice-President Bush was able to give the Salvadoran military a list of people he wanted out. The following year, Vernon Walters went to El Salvador to warn D'Aubuisson not to proceed with plans to harm American diplomats. In early 1985, the CIA issued a comprehensive report--still classified--on ARENA and the organization of the death squads. Newsweek reported last week that U.S. intelligence agencies had reported on a meeting in which D'Aubuisson threatened the Jesuits by name the evening before they were killed. We've been dealing with these guys, on very intimate terms, for more than a decade. We know a lot.

The Task Force should ask--and ask repeatedly--for detailed information about everything the U.S. knows about the Jesuit case, and about the larger issue of ARENA and military involvement in the death squads. Members need to be on even terms with the Administration. The Administration does not hesitate to pass on intelligence information about arms supplies. It should not hesitate to make information available--with proper safeguards--about death squads. The purpose is not to disclose classified information. The purpose is to exert pressure (on the

Administration, on Cristiani, and on the Salvadoran military).

1. The Jesuits case.

On the morning of November 16, six Jesuit priests and two women employees were shot and killed in a building located on the campus of the University of Central America in San Salvador.

Since November 11, when the guerrilla offensive had begun, the area around the university campus had been under military control.

On November 13, the living quarters of the Jesuits were searched by uniformed military. Human rights types suggest the search was conducted for the purpose of 'casing' the premises.

Throughout the previous week, a government controlled radio station broadcast threats against various church and opposition political leaders. The threats supposedly came from callers to a call-in radio show.

Previous threats had been published in newspapers by an ARENA front group, and less-obvious threats have been made from time to time by military officials.

The only purported witness said she saw up to 30 military men, uniformed in camouflage, but no more than 5 or 6 at any one time. She was interviewed first by churchpeople; then by U.S. and Salvadoran officials in El Salvador; and then by U.S. and Salvadoran officials again in Miami. Apparently, she has failed lie detector tests and altered her story. U.S. human rights groups and Salvadoran church officials have alleged undue pressure by the interrogators.

The investigation in El Salvador is confusing to say the least.

o The case is being handled by Ricardo Zamora, judge of the 4th criminal court of San Salvador. Under Salvadoran law, he has the authority to compel testimony. I think it was he who interviewed the witness in El Salvador.

o a Special Investigations Unit, established with U.S. aid, comprised of people from the security services and responsible to the Minister of Interior (I think)--is supposed to be providing technical help.

o The Attorney General, Mauricio Colorado, a Cristiani appointee, has been interviewed many times about the case, and admitted more than a week after the killings that the military had not yet been interviewed, and that no one knew which unit was on duty in the vicinity of the University. Those interviews have since been done (I think). Colorado has also been criticized for writing to the Pope shortly after the murders and urging him to get priests out of El Salvador before they are killed by the left. (He's kind of an old-fashioned guy).

o outside technical help provided by the U.S. and others (performing the autopsies, for example).

o The military should be conducting their own investigation, but it does not appear to be doing so.

o The church appears to be trying to investigate on its own; the Archbishop's office released a 38 page report two weeks ago saying that all the evidence points to the military. The Auxiliary Bishop of San Salvador, Rosa Chavez, was quoted on December 3 as saying that some of the killers are "already known". No one knows what he meant by that and he hasn't elaborated.

o An anonymous letter, supposedly written by dissident Army officers, has accused the head of the Treasury Police of masterminding the killings. That accusation has since been picked up by the FMLN, who probably wrote the letter from the

"dissident" Army officers in the first place.

Just FYI, Dr. Ignacio Ellacuria, rector of the University and the most prominent of the victims, said that "D'Aubuisson, who has come to realize that the party (ARENA) had to become more moderate if it wanted to reach power, is no longer responsible for the death squads. There are three groups within ARENA. Cristiani's civilian wing. D'Aubuisson's militarist wing. And the wing run by the death squads. Cristiani is as sincere as he is naive. Cristiani knows where the violence by the death squads is coming from, but there is nothing he can do about it."

Note also that Ellacuria has been increasingly critical of the FMLN over the past year. In addition, he was chosen by Cristiani to serve on a Commission that was to investigate the bombing of the left-wing FENESTRAS union headquarters in October (killing 9). There is a theory that the power of the FENESTRAS explosion resulted from explosives inside the union headquarters, that Ellacuria had a pretty good idea this was true, and that he was killed by the FMLN to keep him quiet about this. I think the theory is preposterous.

Other things that have happened recently:

o mid-October, Joya Martinez, a self-proclaimed former member of a Salvadoran death squad surfaces in Mexico. Says he has helped kill 8 people this year at the orders of his superiors in the First Army brigade in San Salvador. Says he worked in an intelligence unit with two Americans, both of whom had code names, and who were in the paper flow, but who never directly talked to him about killings. He was forced to escape El Salvador after he flubbed an execution, and was targeted for execution himself (I've met with him, and found him fairly credible and very chilling).

o Late October, FMLN broke off negotiations with the government, claiming their positions were not being respected. Criticized by

→

I am writing in support of Sylvia Shultz ~~for~~
who has applied for admission to _____

Sylvia is a remarkably woman who has
become a leader for ~~the~~ ~~community~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~area~~ ~~of~~
human rights ~~and~~ ~~is~~ ~~an~~ ~~active~~ ~~member~~ ~~of~~
I love her Sylvia

- 

government, church and leftwing politicians, like Ruben Zamora, for doing so.

o November 11, guerrilla offensive begins throughout the country.

o November 16, killing of Jesuits.

o November 22, guerillas seize Sheraton hotel, keep green berets trapped for 24 hours, then slip away.

o November 23, Salvadoran assembly passes law giving President sweeping powers to arrest those thought to be undermining "the public order."

o Nov. 25, plane crashes in Salvador carrying large cargo of weapons, apparently from Nicaragua. Cristiani severs relations with Nicaragua.

o November 28, Chachi Guerrero, oligarch and former Chief Justice of Supreme Court assassinated by FMLN. Latest in a series of a half-dozen major assassinations against civilians this year.

o American churchwoman alleges she was tortured by Treasury police, while embassy official had coffee with the Colonel in charge. (I'd split the difference on this)

o Jennifer Casolo arrested for hiding weapons.

o Dec. 4; Salvadoran Air Force begins distributing flier telling people that "you have the plain and legitimate right to defend your life and property--if to do that, you have to kill terrorists or their international allies--do it."

Throughout this period, the Salvadoran security forces are harassing labor and church groups, trying to expel foreigners, and consenting to the use of government-controlled media to air threats against Zamora, church leaders and others. The fear is that a massive--and brutal--crackdown is being planned. If that

Tuesday

a.m. Arch bishop / Maria Julia /
Rosa Chong

→ UNTS / UNICEF

→ Strong general / Judge /
Benavides atty.

→ ARENA Buena Vista

→ visit Chiriqui community

— Francisco Stein

— D'Ambrosio & Ochoa

— Ruben Zamora

Wednesday — a.m. Cristiani
→ joints again?
(Other Embassy people)

2:00 — pass conference

happens, the FMLN is partly to blame, and perhaps it was even their intent, because the offensive exposed a part of the guerilla support network. Some labor and human rights types fought openly on the guerrillas side and then were left behind. Neighborhoods in which the guerrillas appeared to be welcomed are now vulnerable. And, as in the Casolo case, the search for those who may have provided food, safe houses and other help to the guerrillas goes on. This is a high price to pay, but it may be that a massive crackdown is exactly what the FMLN has been trying to provoke all year. (Otherwise, why lob mortars at the relatives of military people and assassinate civilian rightwingers?)

Another major issue right now is the future of Cristiani. I've been surprised by the near unanimity of praise for his personal qualities. Even the Salvadoran left and the Nicaraguan government have said he's a decent man (The American left, however, persists in accusing him of genocide). Unfortunately, he looks as helpless as a US Ambassador in the current situation. That's one of the reasons why the unraveling of the Jesuit case is so important--it may prove to be a test of will and power that goes right to the heart of the Salvadoran problem--and right to the center of whether there's any hope for U.S. policy of supporting "democracy" in El Salvador.

Sunday

- William Walker

Richard Anderson - Paco Pulencia - Mayor Kenyatta

Janice Elmore

- Evening - ?

Jim Wankate
of Grant, Honey
buried
32 Lake Drive
Needles 02192

Monday -

Jesuits - tour of UCA
assembly lay wreath on graves
briefly by Estrada

STU

Military
Ponce / Zepeda / Elena - Fuentes / - ?

Doc - Embassy dinner