

9-19

EL SALVADOR TASK FORCE

Summary

- Federal System - recruitment

What is the mandate?

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

Bill

When should it report?

o ~~end of January.~~ *end of February*

How should it report?

o a written summary of information obtained, including the identity of sources.

With what issues should it deal?

o the murder of the Jesuits and the subsequent investigation.

Y

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;

-- FMLN. - theories why it happened.

--breakdown of peace talks and subsequent FMLN offensive.

o prospects for renewing negotiations.

Discussion

1. In plain English, the purpose of the group is 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 that information available to the leadership and to the relevant House Committees when Congress re-convenes.

2. Creation of the task force resulted primarily from two factors:

First, events in El Salvador:

--the increasing and increasingly brutal violence;

--the chronic failure of the Salvadoran government to prosecute those responsible for political crimes;

--the breakdown of negotiations; and

--the failure of a massive U.S. investment to produce needed economic and judicial reforms.

Second, the desire of Members of Congress to look beyond the claims and counter-claims of various sides to make an independent judgment, based on the facts as best they can be determined, about what changes in U.S. policy are warranted by these events.

3. 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. It may be possible, however, to include more limited policy statements, based on information obtained by the task force, in any final report.

4. Once Congress re-convenes, it will be extremely difficult for the task force to retain an independent identity in any case, so it should not try. The goal should be to produce a one-time hand off of information to the leadership and the relevant committees (and the press) and let them take it from there. Describing the

mandate of the task force as 'information gathering' may also help insulate us, at least a little bit, from criticisms of partisanship.

5. Even within the 'information gathering' framework, the task force has a real opportunity to influence policy judgments about El Salvador. 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.

6. 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?

7. By asking tough and specific questions about past crimes, the task force may help prevent future ones.

8. 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. In 1983, Vice-President Bush gave 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. The bottom line is that the U.S. knows a lot about how death squads work and about their relationship to particular individuals within the military and ARENA. We also know how to send a serious message to El Salvador when we want to. The question is, does the

Administration think that killing Jesuits is sufficient cause to send that message now?

Procedures?

Who knows, but--

find out which staff people are willing to contribute;

put together a staff working group;

send a staff delegation to El Salvador before Christmas;

inform Members of a Members trip the second or third week of January.

The staff group should schedule a couple of days of meetings, prior to going to El Salvador, with the Administration and NGO's, and with itself--to identify and agree on questions.

Somebody, or a small group of somebodies, should be assigned to take notes of all meetings and write the report.

An interim report, based on the staff trip, should be prepared as a briefing for the Members' trip.

FIBES

no call mem

no denials
of conclusion of FMLN.

// taped //

8:00 pm
7/10
James + ...