

Fox: Joe Moakley

call Steve Kurkjian ASAP

202-223-1950

I would basically read this - (but make sure it doesn't sound like you're reading it)

**STATEMENT BY CONGRESSMAN JOE MOAKLEY (D-MASS.)
ON STATUS OF SALVADORAN JESUIT CASE**

Based on the information currently available to the task force, I believe that the investigation into the killings of the Jesuits has made substantial progress in analyzing the technical aspects of the case. However, I am deeply concerned that important leads suggesting a cover-up or that military higher-ups may be involved are not being fully investigated.

The nature and circumstances of the crime are such that the involvement of high level military officials, either in ordering the murders or in having prior knowledge of them, appears likely. The members of our task force will not be satisfied with an investigation that is limited to the identification of those who actually did the killings. Those who ordered or otherwise consented to the crime must also be brought to justice.

To date, the Salvadoran Government has identified and charged 9 men in carrying out the actual killings, and the senior officer who supposedly ordered the murders. I have publicly praised President Cristiani for taking this important first step. But, I believe more were involved. Indeed, the chief investigator of this case told me that based on the technical evidence alone -- he thought more than 9 were involved.

I hope the investigation will proceed rapidly, but also thoroughly. A successful investigation and prosecution in this case would constitute a significant breakthrough in the history of El Salvador and remove a serious obstacle to the development of genuinely democratic rule in that country. On the other hand, a failed investigation, or one that concludes prematurely, would seriously endanger continued Congressional support for the Salvadoran government and renew doubts about the ability of civilian leaders in El Salvador to exercise control over the armed forces.

I am also very concerned that Col. Benavides, the man charged with ordering the murders, might walk free. Under the Salvadoran legal code, one individual charged in a crime cannot testify against another individual involved in the same crime. Currently, the only public evidence against Benavides is the testimony of those charged with the actual murders.

Members of the Speaker's Task Force on El Salvador will continue to monitor closely the progress of the investigation and follow-up on a number of leads -- and we hope to have a report filed in two or three weeks.

You might also mention...

* The task force has information -- not evidence -- that points to military higher ups. We're investigating it -- it wouldn't be responsible to name names at this time.

* The task force will meet with Major Buckland within the next two weeks (don't give out exact date) -- and ask Kurkijian not to use Buckland's name.

*We are still trying to obtain relevant Embassy cable traffic from the State Department --- and having a very difficult time.