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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

February 1, 1982

Dear Mr. President:

It is reported that you plan to have a battalion of 1,000 Salvadoran soldiers and a group of 500 or 600 Salvadoran officers trained in the United States. On January 9, 1982, the first of that group, 60 sergeants and officers, arrived at Fort Bragg, North Carolina to begin 16 weeks of basic infantry training with the Green Berets. I am writing to register my strong objection to this action.

Mr. President, I have read numerous accounts and reports of the conditions and the political situation in El Salvador. Every one of these reports leads me to believe, beyond a doubt, that the present government in El Salvador lacks respect for the basic human and civil rights of its people. In fact, a recent report of the United Nations Human Rights Commission estimates that well over 9,000 political murders were committed in the first six months of 1981 alone. It seems to me that by militarily supporting the present Salvadoran government and, now, by training Salvadoran soldiers in the United States we are contributing to the oppression that already exists. We are, in essence, training Salvadoran troops to oppress their own people. We are certainly not preserving the Salvadoran people's right to freedom of speech or self-determination. As I am sure you are aware, the people of El Salvador do not enjoy such luxuries. What we are, in fact, doing is forcing the Salvadoran people to hate and reject the United States just as much as they depise their present government. Our support of this government, through military means, is nothing short of unconscionable.

I am also terribly concerned over the fact that the United States military involvement in El Salvador has increased so rapidly. The parallels between our involvement in Vietnam and our present policy toward El Salvador are uncanny. I am fearful that in the not too distant future we will see the first American soldier come home from El Salvador in a coffin.

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I urge you to reconsider the decision to train Salvadoran troops in the United States and lessen American military involvement in that country.

Sincerely,

JOHN JOSEPH MOAKLEY
Member of Congress

The President
The White House
Washington, D. C. 20500