

Memo

TO: Congressman Joe Moakley

FR: Jim McGovern

RE: Meeting at Robert Foxworth and Elizabeth Montgomery's house

1. Let me talk a little about my background... I am basically a nuts and bolts, bread and butter politician from South Boston. Where I come from, as soon as you're born, you're baptized in the Catholic Church, sworn into the Democratic Party and given a union card.

2. I first became interested in El Salvador back in 1983 -- when a group of constituents came to visit me with some Salvadoran refugees who were afraid of being deported. I listened to the refugees and then began to look into their allegations. I was shocked at the reports of torture and the killing. And I was even more shocked that the U.S. government was deporting Salvadorans back to these conditions. In 1983, I introduced a bill -- which has since passed the House 3 times -- to suspend deportations of Salvadorans. Unfortunately, the Senate hasn't been able to get its act together and the Reagan and Bush Administrations have both opposed it. However, I haven't given up... and there is still hope that we can work something out.

3. Shortly after the Nov. 16th murders of the six Jesuits and two women, Speaker Tom Foley appointed me the head of a Special Task Force to monitor the Salvadoran government's investigation into the killings and to look into other related matters. It has been an eye-opening experience -- and has only reinforced my view that military aid should be stopped.

4. I come from South Boston where people don't even swear at priests...so I was especially repulsed at the murders. In addition, I knew two of the priests (Father Segundo Montes and Father Ellacuria, the rector of the UCA).

5. For the last few months, I and 18 others on the Task Force have met with dozens of Salvadoran government officials, Jesuits, human rights groups, Administration officials and other experts. We have tried to learn as much as we could. In February, 15 Members of Congress travelled with me to visit the country.

6. I would encourage you to visit El Salvador -- if you haven't already. It's sad to see the violence and fear. The only encouraging thing is the spirit of the people; they haven't given up and they are so full of hope.

7. While in El Salvador, we visited with everyone from President Cristiani to the Army Chief of Staff, Col Ponce -- and with Ambassador Walker, the Archbishop Rivera y Damas, the Jesuits, opposition political leader Ruben Zamora, journalists, labor leaders, human right officials....etc.....

8. I think Cristiani is like Duarte --- basically an OK guy, but someone who does not have control over the military. Sadly, US policy has always revolved around a figurehead like Cristiani or Duarte. They both were educated in Jesuit colleges in the US (Cristiani at Georgetown and Duarte at Notre Dame); they both spoke good English and were charming in social settings --- but that's it. I do not believe that Cristiani is calling the shots.

9. As far as the US Embassy is concerned...it troubles me how closely they work with the Salvadoran military. They are not only advisors - - but they are friends. One woman political officer from the Embassy who escorted us to the high command practically "french kissed" the entire base. You have to wonder whether the embassy is capable of being objective.

10. Specifically, with regard to the Jesuit case I believe:

a) the investigation has stalled. The chief investigator is not looking into the issue of higher up involvement. And I strongly believe that the orders to kill the Jesuits came from higher-ups who have not been named.

b) The murder of the Jesuits were crimes of immense national importance. The possibility that Col. Benavides, the man charged with ordering the murders, would personally conceive of and execute an operation of this magnitude and brutality struck everyone we talked to as extremely remote.

c) You should know that Col. Benavides was the head of the military school-- and wasn't a field commander. He assumed operational control of all military units near the military school -- which is near the UCA -- after the FMLN offensive began (a few days before the murders). Benavides is known by some as "the poet." He had no history of anti-jesuit activities.

d) Col. Benavides is a member of the tandon, the powerful 1966 graduating class of the Salvadoran military academy. He was a classmate of Col. Ponce, the Army Chief of Staff and of Col. Zepeda, the Vice Minister of Defense -- both of whom were above him in the chain of command the day of the murders. These are people Benavides worked with all his life. It is difficult to imagine Benavides doing anything without first checking with these guys.

e) As it now stands, it looks unlikely that Col. Benavides will be brought to justice. Under Salvadoran law, co-conspirators cannot testify against other co-conspirators. The only evidence against Benavides is the testimony of the triggermen who say he gave the order. That is inadmissible in Salvadoran courts.

11. One thing that bothered me during my trip was the fact that no one in the military ever said they were sorry that the priests were killed -- or that it was a tragic loss to the country. They would only say things like "what a stupid mistake" or "this helped make the FMLN look good."

12. The problem in El Salvador, as illustrated by the Jesuit murders, is the military. And it is an institutional problem. The military is corrupt and vicious. They believe they are above the law. And despite enormous amounts of US aid, the military as an institution has not reformed. Benavides is supposed to be in jail -- and instead his fellow officers have put him in a nice apartment and have taken him to the beach.

13. My biggest worry about the upcoming negotiations is not the FMLN or Cristiani -- it's the military. They have the most to lose. With peace, they lose their power and money.

14. As you know the FMLN and the government have agreed to begin negotiations aimed at ending the war. The talks will be mediated by the United Nations. This is positive. (No date has been set for the first meeting)

15. The Congress is trying to decide what to do. I personally think we should tell the Salvadoran military to go to hell -- and cut their aid. But, I do not think we have the votes to do that.

16. A proposal that I think might pass is one which we cut 50% of the military aid upfront and tie the rest to good faith negotiations. If the FMLN launches another offensive the military aid will be restored. If the Government doesn't negotiate in good faith or if there is a military coup -- all aid gets cut.

17. I met with the Secretary of State last week. He says the Administration wants to deal on this issue. However, he wasn't very specific. Talking to Jim Baker is like eating Chinese food, you're still hungry when your finished.

18. Congress might begin debate on El Salvador within the next couple of weeks.

19. Obviously at the appropriate moment, anything you could do to help would be appreciated.

20. Again, let me say that this is an issue that has had a strong impact on me. I'm not the type of guy who would usually carry the banner on this type of issue... I'm not a peacenik or a guy with a great expertise on foreign affairs. But, it's our money that is killing these people.

I recall recently watching a tv program in which Bernie Aronson, our undersecretary of state for Latin America was asked about whether our current policy has been worth it -- given the fact that 70,000 Salvadorans have been killed in the last ten years. He replied "well

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sometimes that is the price we have to pay." I wanted to jump through the tv set and shake him...because we, the United States, haven't paid anything except some money. But the people of El Salvador have paid dearly -- and it has cost them 70,000 lives. They have had it.

University of Central America. As you know, these priests were brilliant theologians and respected leaders for peace. Their deaths represent a tremendous blow to El Salvador.

I also felt an enormous sense of sadness for the two women who were killed -- Mrs. Elba Julia Ramos and her daughter Marisela. They, like so many of the thousands who have died in El Salvador, are virtually unknown. If it wasn't for the fact that they were murdered along side six internationally known priests, very little attention, if any, would have been given to bringing their assassins to justice.

As you know, eight members of the military, including a colonel, have been arrested in connection with the murders of the Jesuits and the two women. One individual implicated in the crime, a ninth man, has deserted.

The arrests of these men is obviously a positive step. And when I saw President Cristiani in El Salvador I commended him for his action. However, I told him, this is not the final curtain -- it's only the first act. We cannot and will not be satisfied with an investigation that is limited to the identification of those who actually pulled the triggers. Those who ordered or otherwise consented to the crimes must also be brought to justice.

It is my hope that next Monday the Task Force will release an interim report on the status of the investigation. And I will have a lot more to say about it at that time.

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Joe:

Here are the details as of 9:30 am (EST).

Sarah Stephens of the Hollywood Womens Political Caucus will meet you in the lobby of the Four Seasons at 6:30pm.

You've met her twice before. Once with Richard Gere and once with Bonnie Raitt. Be extra nice to her -- because she is a big fan.

Also, Robert Foxworth is on the board of Pax Americas (it used to be Dave Bonior's group). You might mention to him what a great job Pax Americas is doing and how wonderful its director, CINDY BUHL, is.

The tentative guest list for cocktails is:

Robert Foxworth-- formally on Falcon Crest

Elizabeth Montgomery -- Bewitched and a number of great tv movies

Mike Farrell -- MASH

Claire Kerry -- COACH

Michele Green -- LA Law

Esai Morales -- "La Bamba" -- he played the evil brother

Holly Near -- singer (excellent voice)

Charlie Stratton -- actor

Susan Kendall

Marge Tabankan -- Executive Director of Women's Political Caucus

(Marge used to be in Washington -- she's a big fundraiser -- be nice to her)

there may be some others