

JANUARY 31st

o It is important to note the physical relationship of the buildings and institutions involved in the Jesuits case. All were located in an extremely important zone that included military installations, housing for the families of senior military officers and UCA.

o The Military school is bordered by buildings that house the Salvadoran equivalent of the CIA. Nearby is the school of intelligence and the Democracy Tower.

o The sequence in the Buckland-Aviles affairs is as follows:

--Benevides tells Lt. Col. Rivas that he is responsible for the crimes;

--Rivas tells Lt. Col. Lopez y Lopez;

--Lopez y Lopez tells Col. Aviles;

--Col. Aviles tells Maj. Buckland;

--Buckland waits almost two weeks and, on Jan. 2, tells Major Hunter in the Milgroup who tells Milgroup leader Col. Milton Menjivar;

--Menjivar and political officer Janice Elmore confront Col. Ponce and unspecified other members of the high command. Ponce responds by telling Menjivar to put the accusation in writing.

--Menjivar returns to Embassy and prepares the statement; DCM Jeffrey Dietrich refuses to sign; Menjivar signs himself (question? Can we get that statement). Returns to High Command. Aviles denies, is polygraphed, fails. Buckland also polygraphed, also fails. Buckland's failure may hinge on statement about

whether Aviles admitted foreknowledge of the murders.

o Aftermath: Aviles not in danger, but believes his career is ruined.

--High Command is, for the first time, faced with tangible evidence of U.S. knowledge of truth.

--SIU almost immediately produces concrete evidence of Atlacatl involvement (ballistics).

--Cristiani makes allegations public.

Question:

-- why haven't Rivas and Lopez y Lopez been polygraphed?

Rhetorical question: Why did Benevides talk to Rivas?

Answer is complicated.

1. There was a meeting of the high command shortly after the offensive began. Several officers expressed the fear they would lose. Decision was made to strike back hard. To use air power. To use artillery. To go against guerrilla command centers. And to go against those who have been fronting for the guerrillas. Each officer instructed to go after targets in his area.

2. The atmosphere of anger within the military had been heightened, not only by the offensive, but by other attacks and assassinations perpetrated by the FMLN in previous months. Officers were especially angry about the murder of the 23 year old daughter of Col. Oscar Casanova Vejar. Casanova Vejar's father (uncle?), Chato Casanova, was a former head of the National Guard and one of two "godfathers" of the Tandoná.

3. Benevides had been given units of the Treasury police, National Guard, Intelligence, Ahuachapan detachment and Atlacatl to command. The UCA was in his zone. He gave the direct order to

carry out the killings.

4. Five Salvadoran military officers, including 3 from intelligence, had rented a house across the street from UCA. The house was used to entertain women. The officers were in the house on the night of the killings (question: is this any way to act while a war's on?). They saw the Atlacatl arrive and recognized the officers. In the morning, they went to look at the bodies. The 3 intelligence officers then returned to Intelligence headquarters (next to the military school, to which the Atlacatl returned). The intelligence officers reported what they had seen. The Atlacatl unit was then transported to the headquarters of the first brigade, away from the scene of the crime.

*any
witness to
this*

(Note: members of the Atlacatl told members of the first brigade what had occurred. This explains the account of Msgr. Rosa Chavez that he heard first brigade members bragging about the crime later that day and threatening to kill more Jesuits)

5. Late afternoon on the day of the killings, a meeting of high intelligence officers was held at which the crimes were discussed. Guzman Aguilar, head of National Police, recommended that nothing be said. He was challenged by one officer. Guzman Aguilar (whose father? was also a "godfather" to the Tandonas) grew angry at being challenged and left the meeting, possibly to report the dissident to the high command.

6. The result of all this was that many in the armed forces knew almost immediately which unit had committed the crime and under whose control that unit was--Benevides. Thus, Benevides had to find out where he stood. Since Rivas had been put in charge, Benevides felt he had to talk to him. Speculation is that the conversation with Rivas took place within a few days of the killings.

Question:

--Can we verify that the Atlacatl was transported to the First

Brigade after the crime was committed? Who gave the order?

DID BENEVIDES ACT ON HIS OWN?

Two possibilities: yes and no.

1. YES. According to one Salvadoran Col., the head of the National Guard saw Benevides after his arrest and asked him how he could possibly have misunderstood his instructions and ordered the murders. Theory is that Benevides misinterpreted the discussion at the meeting of the high command and felt he had been instructed to carry out the killings when, in fact, he had not. This theory is supported by the indirect way that Salvadorans have of talking to each other and also by the possibility that Benevides may have been prompted to act by the sudden illness of his son, which he may have attributed to stress brought on by the guerrilla offensive.

2. NO. Just theory, but members of the Tandonas have been virtually living with each other for 30 years. They don't misunderstand each other. This theory is also supported somewhat by the coverup that took place after the crime. Also, Benevides reportedly told his family that he had been ordered to kill the Jesuits.

CURRENT STATUS OF INVESTIGATION

Is it likely that others will come forward? One civilian witness who lives near UCA was told by a SIU investigator, only a few days ago, not to say anything and preferably to leave the country. This is a message that presumably everybody in the armed forces is getting, as well.

Questions:

--why haven't others at the military school been questioned...they saw the Atlacatl leave/they saw it come back.

Resumed

--why haven't the drivers who took the unit to UCA been questioned?

TRANSFERS

What has happened to some of the key figures in the case?

1. Bustillo, present at high command meeting, transferred to Israel.
2. Guzman Aguilar, the head of National Police, given the tough job of military attache to Costa Rica, which has no military.
3. Col. Cerna Flores, in overall charge of operations at the time of offensive, transferred.
4. Another individual with information on the case transferred.
5. Aviles, supposed to be assigned to Washington, is in limbo.

MISCELLANEOUS

The fact that Salvadoran military intelligence was immediately aware of the identity of the real killers supports the possibility that the Newsweek report indicating D'Aubuisson's involvement was deliberately planted disinformation.

It is possible that Ponce authorized the search of UCA on the 13th, and that Cristiani's authorization was added later, for some reason.

It is possible that Fr. Ellacuria gave the Atlacatl the keys to UCA on the night of the 13th.