

EL SALVADOR STAFF REPORT--ATTACHMENT (CONFIDENTIAL)

This attachment summarizes information provided to us on a confidential basis by individuals who do not wish to be identified. As a result, we cannot, in most instances, verify the information.

o After the meeting of the high command on November 15th, Col. Benavides returned to the military school and told a group that included Lt. Col. Camilo Hernandez, the captains and majors in his operational command, and the lieutenants that he "had received the green light to go after the UCA". One of the officers then said "but Ellacuria isn't there." Another said "Yes, he is, he came back." (a military source)

o At the meeting at the military school on the night of the murders, Benavides asked those present to volunteer to participate in the operation. Lt. Yushy Mendoza said no, but was forced to accompany the troops nevertheless. (civilian source)

o The AK-47 used in the murders belonged to Lt. Col. Camilo Hernandez. Hernandez was deeply involved in making preparations for the murders. (Military, embassy sources)

o Also after the meeting of the high command, Gen. Bustillo returned to the Air Force headquarters and told a small group of his officers that a decision had been made to kill Ellacuria. (military source)

o On the morning of the 16th, a group of military intelligence officers were in a house near the UCA, reportedly with some women. They saw the Atlacatl enter the UCA, and they observed the bodies in the morning before returning to their headquarters. (military source--second hand)

o A person who works for the military was told during the day of the 16th that the Atlacatl unit was responsible for the murders.

The information came from a friend who was with an infantry unit stationed in the same sector as the UCA. This person did not share the information because "in El Salvador, you talk until you learn the truth; then you shut up." (military source)

o According to one Embassy officer, it is illogical to believe that the high command ordered the murders. The reason is that the high command would have used a trained death squad, such as the one run out of the Air Force, to perpetrate the crimes. We know of no public acknowledgment by the U.S. Government of a death squad run out of the Air Force.

o A lieutenant colonel has told the embassy that Lt. Col. Rivas of the SIU told other members of his tanda that Col. Benavides had admitted his responsibility for the murders. This essentially verifies Major Buckland's original story. The same source, however, claims that there were two American officers in the Democracy Tower on the night of the murders. The embassy says this is not true. The source has also asked the embassy for help with visas. (embassy source)

o On December 10, 1989, Col. Ponce said at a meeting of the high command that "we would not be here if I had not made the decision I did." To this, Gen. Bustillo (the hard-line commander of the Air Force) replied "you have done well my Colonel, but we must continue to take a very hard line." The interpretation of our source is that these statements referred to the murders at the UCA. (military source)

o At two meetings with other military officers in January, 1990, Col. Ponce called Col. Aviles a "traitor" for talking to Major Buckland. (military source)

o The new director of the military school reported to Col. Ponce immediately upon taking command last January or February that the logbooks indicating the comings and goings of vehicles from the school were missing. Col. Ponce did not pass this information on to the Minister of Defense, to President Cristiani, or to

judicial authorities. (military source)

o According to his orderly, Captain Chavez Garcia of the Treasury Police refused an order from his commander, Col. Heriberto Hernandez, to murder the Jesuits. It was only then that the decision was made to give the job to Benavides and the Atlacatl. Captain Chavez was killed in May by a single shot through the head while serving in a special detachment away from his normal unit. The armed forces reported that he was killed in combat. (An embassy source reported that he has since disappeared. (military source) had urged the removal of Lt. Col. Rivas as head of the SIU, because he was too weak and would not seriously investigate the Jesuit murders).

o President Cristiani has been told by the military not to press too hard in the Jesuits case or he will be killed. The threat was reportedly conveyed to him by retired General Vides Casanova, whose wife is the sister of Cristiani's wife. (civilian source)

o The two lawyers in the fiscal general's office who have had day to day responsibility in the case, Sidney Blanco and Henry Campos, are resigning as of January 1. They say they have fought continually with their superiors for the right to put serious questions to witnesses in the case. Instead, they have been limited in what they could ask, and have even been barred from participating in crucial interviews (e.g. Lt. Col. Rivas and his assistant). They believe the military is engaging in a major and successful coverup in the case. For reasons of personal safety, they will not go public with their accusations. (source: Blanco and Campos). (Note: a Salvadoran newspaper has reported, and retracted, a story that Blanco and Campos have been dismissed by the Fiscal General)

o There is a difficult to pin down story going around that the defendants have been told by their superiors that they can expect to go to jail, but only for 2-3 years. (several sources--none specific)

o The armed forces have conveyed to the judge the message that the military is willing to accept the conviction of those charged with the crimes (source: embassy)

o A U.S. military adviser assigned to the Atlacatl told a Salvadoran officer this summer that he had known in December that the Atlacatl had committed the murders. As a result, the two officers who had been assigned to the Atlacatl are being flown back from the Persian Gulf for questioning. (source: military)

Congress: → What steps have you taken in
response to the allegations of the two prosecutors.
Have you talked w/ the attorney. Have
you talked w/ the 2 prosecutors.?

→ Do you plan to take any action.

Htg.

I remain concerned over the
lack of real progress in the Justice case.
Integrity and - by law - hope in
America.

written on
back of
last page.