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SALVADOR KILLINGS RISE DESPITE U.S. PLEA -- (BY KENNETH FREED) (Extension of Remarks - March 16, 1989)

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HON. JOE MOAKLEY

in the House of Representatives

THURSDAY, MARCH 16, 1989

- Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my deep concern regarding the situation in **El Salvador** and to express my outrage over our Government's continued deportation of Salvadoran refugees who have sought temporary safety in the United States.
- Despite Vice President **Quayle's** recent visit to **El Salvador** and his stern warning to the military that they must improve their human rights record or face the loss of future U.S. aid--the situation has worsened. In fact, according to Tutela Legal, the human rights office of the Catholic Church, the number of death-squad-style killings has risen dramatically.
- Mr. Speaker, the war goes on; both sides continue to target civilians for persecution; thousands are currently displaced from their homes; and, unless real steps towards peace are taken soon--the death toll will escalate.
- It will take more than tough talk and more than elections to change the course in **El Salvador** .
- In the meantime, while Congress and the administration reevaluate our policy, let us have the compassion and the simple decency to temporarily halt deportations--at least until the conflict has calmed.
- Mr. Speaker, I would like to submit to the **Record** the following article which appeared in the Los Angeles Times on March 9.

(BY KENNETH FREED)

San Salvador .--Vice President Dan Quayle's trip here last month to demand that the government end human rights violations or face the loss of American aid has had almost no impact, with the number of killings actually increasing since his visit, according to diplomats and human rights groups.

In the month before the vice president's February trip, the number of civilian deaths attributed to death squads and the military was eight. However, since Feb. 3, when Quayle told the Salvadoran

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military that the United States 'expects them to work toward the elimination of human rights violations,' killings attributed to rightwing death squads and the military have matched the earlier monthly average of 20 a month, according to figures compiled by human rights organizations.

And, although pressure from Quayle for action in one case has resulted in movement in that instance, many diplomats are still skeptical that anyone will actually be punished.

That case involves the so-called San Sebastian massacre of Sept. 21, in which members of the army's 5th Brigade allegedly killed 10 civilians suspected of supporting the Marxist rebel organization, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front.

After the U.S. Embassy here became convinced that the army had covered up the direct responsibility of senior officers for the killings, Quayle was asked to put pressure on the military. He arrived with the names of three army officers, all members of the 5th Brigade, and said that action had to be taken against them.

The three are Col. Jose Emilio Chavez Caceres, the brigade's commander; Maj. Mauricio de Jesus Beltran, its intelligence chief, and the officer in charge of the San Sebastian operation, known only as Lt. Vasquez.

Quayle adopted a tactic used in 1983 by then-Vice President George Bush. Bush came here with a list of nine people he said were responsible for many of the human rights violations by death squads and the military. Bush's trip is credited by many Salvadoran and foreign officials with moderating the human rights abuses of that period.

Quayle met privately with military leaders, told them of his concern and then handed a sealed envelope containing the three names to the U.S. Ambassador William Walker, who passed it on to the minister of defense, Gen. Carlos Vides Casanova.

Sources close to the military high command said Vides Casanova and other officers were outraged at what they felt was unacceptable interference in their affairs. Yet they heeded the warning that a lack of action would endanger the \$430 million a year that **El Salvador** receives from the United States.

As a result, Col. Chavez Caceres has been suspended as 5th Brigade commander and brought to the capital, though he is not under arrest. Maj. Beltran and Lt. Vasquez are being held at military installations in San **Salvador**, as is a fourth officer, a Lt. Galvez, who was a platoon commander during the San Sebastian operation.

Sources close to the military say the action in the San Sebastian case is little more than a sop to pacify the United States and that Quayle's message is being largely disregarded.

There has been no progress in several other prominent human rights cases on which the United States had demanded action.

According to Tutela Legal, the human rights office of the Catholic Church here, and several Western diplomats, the overall Salvadoran record is bleak. Even diplomats who are critical of Tutela, Legal, and who try to minimize the human rights situation, acknowledge that Quayle's visit 'doesn't appear to have had any effect.'

Meanwhile, there has been a steady stream of disappearances of people assumed by Tutela Legal and diplomatic sources to be victims of death squads.

In the past month, court officials have ordered several exhumations at what were called 'body dumps' in the early 1980s, when death squads were killing people and dumping them at these places at the

rate of 800 a month.

Last Saturday, three bodies were dug up near the suburb of Soyapango, all men who had been taken from their homes, tortured and shot. The three were residents of Soyapango, an area often used as a body dump and controlled by the air force, which has a reputation of taking extreme measures against suspected guerrillas and their sympathizers.

Tutela Legal has also accused the army of killing a woman doctor and a 14-year-old girl acting as a nurse last month at a guerrilla field hospital in northern Chalatenango province. In addition to allegedly killing these two, allegedly after raping them, the army is also accused of killing three paramedics and five wounded guerrillas being cared for in the hospital.

Despite the action taken as a result of the San Sebastian incident, sources close to the proceeding doubt that the case will go much further. Col. Chavez Caseres, the former brigade commander, was a military academy classmate of the army chief of staff, Col. Rene Emilio Ponce, and several other influential officers.

U.S. officials acknowledge that no Salvadoran military officer has been convicted of a crime since 1979. A European diplomat said that 'if there is any public attempt to punish [the officers in the San Sebastian incident], it will cause a military reaction.'

Although Chavez Caseres has been suspended and other officers arrested, the army has not complied with court procedure by turning over evidence and delivering the officers for questioning.

Nor has the court been given a videotape, made by the army just minutes after the killings, that contradicts an almost uniform account of the incident given by enlisted men who were at the scene. These men testified that the civilians had been killed in a guerrilla ambush, but their account is challenged by sources close to the investigation.

In Washington, Quayle's spokesman, David Beckwith, said the United States wants those accused to be brought to 'a fair trial . . . we want justice to be done.'

The United States 'can't dictate their procedures, but it has to be perceived as a fair investigation.'

Adding to the doubts about a just conclusion to the San Sebastian case, or any other violation of human rights, is the fear that clings to any such investigation here. The judge who originally investigated the incident has been forced to resign and go into hiding.

'I am afraid,' Judge Ediz Alcides Guardique Calvallo said in an interview. 'If they threaten me or hurt my family, I will have to leave. Now there is great international pressure, and that is stopping them. But what will I do later? Later they can get me.'

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