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TAPE 40 - JIM McGOVERN INTERVIEW

: Why don't we start just by your telling me about how you became involved in El Salvador issues?

McGOVERN:

Well, <sup>18:31:15 T.40</sup> my first involvement, really, with <sup>McG. of</sup> El Salvador and Mokley's first involvement came back in 1983, when a group of Salvadoran refugees came to visit him in his Boston office and they were frightened and scared because they were afraid they were going to be deported back to their country, which was engulfed in this violent civil war. And they, you know, came to Mokley very nervously and said, "Can you help us, you know, get a reprieve? We were afraid to go back. We'll be killed." And they had explained how they had left El Salvador. And one of them had, you know, was a student activist and heard that the military came looking for him at his parents' house. And as they went in the front door he went out the back door, and kept on running until he got to Boston, I guess. But, uh, anyway,

Mokley, you know, agreed to look into it for him. And, uh, we'd been, we were dealing with the Reagan administration at the time, and they had absolutely no sympathy whatsoever for the plight of Salvadoran refugees, and we, you know, we tried, we pleaded with them to try to see whether or not they would grant what they called Extended Voluntary Departure, which was just a temporary stay of deportation until the violence had ended, and they wouldn't, you know. And the reason they wouldn't was because they wouldn't acknowledge that El Salvador was undergoing this violent civil war. They, uh, they said all these people who come to the United States are just here for one reason, and that is economics.) So we, Mokley then embarked on, you know, a, an effort that I think took almost seven years. And we finally passed a bill called Temporary Protected Status, which gave these Salvadorans, gave, you know, literally hundreds of thousands of Salvadorans a

temporary stay of deportation and, you know, it's still in effect now. (So that <sup>M'g - of his Mokley involvement in ES</sup> was our first involvement. And then, uh, you know, just when we, just when we thought we were through with kind of the Salvadoran issue, because Mokley is very much a bread-and-butter politician. He's not one of these foreign policy experts. You know, he, he learned diplomacy not in the Fletcher School but on the streets of South Boston where he grew up, and when the, when the six Jesuit priests and two women were killed in November of 1989, speaker Tom Foley called him up and said, "Geez, I want to put, I want to do something. I want to put together a special task force to monitor the Salvadoran government's investigation, and I want you to head it." And Mokley said, "Well, why do you want me to head it? I mean, I, you know, I'm, you know, I don't know, I'm not an expert on diplomacy." And he says, you know, and he says, and Mokley says, "If you took out an ad, you know,

18:33

in the congressional newspapers saying, 'Who wants this job?'," he said, "you'd probably get 434 applicants, but you wouldn't get my name." And Foley said, "Well, that's why I want you.) I mean, I want, you know, this is a very controversial issue, and there's a lot of deep-seated partisan emotions on this issue, you know, and you have a reputation for being a genial fellow, and you can help, you know, kind of, uh, maybe de-fang some of the right wingers up here, and you can, you know, maybe, and you're honest enough not to buy into what the left wingers will tell you. You know, you'll just, you'll say what you, you'll tell the truth." And that's how we got involved, you know, and that's how we got in monitoring the Jesuit case, and, uh, you know, uh, we've been involved in it ever since.

: Why do you think that the Jesuit murders struck such a chord both with members of Mokley and yourself, and also with the people in general here in the State?

McGOVERN:

18:35:00 <sup>5</sup>  
Well, it's a terrible thing to say, but,  
you know, because really, you know, the  
killing of a priest is, you know, is no  
more outrageous than the killing of a  
peasant. But, you know, when people,  
when people here in the United States,  
you know, the idea of killing a holy  
man, you know, is just, you know, people  
can't fathom it. It's beyond, you know,  
comprehension. I mean, it's like, you  
know, it's not only terrible it's, you  
know, it's more than terrible. I mean,  
it's just that kind of reaction. And,  
so, I mean, I think people were just  
outraged by the fact that, you know,  
they, someone went in, you know, to  
their rooms in the middle of the night  
and killed six priests. And it just  
was, you know, a horrifying crime. And,  
uh, so, I mean, that, you know, that's  
one thing. The other thing is the press  
had basically ignored El Salvador for  
the, in the later part of the 1980's.  
You know, there were still human rights  
violations going on, but the military

down there was a little bit more clever. I mean, they knew that, you know, killing a hundred people would probably make The Washington Post, but if you killed five people, it won't, you know, and you still can get the same intimidation effect by killing five people as you did a hundred people. So there was, the military became a little bit more clever on how they, on how they did their dirty work. And it wasn't newsworthy enough. And when the priests were killed, there was this, it was like a wake-up call here in Congress. A lot of people were saying, "Jesus, I thought we had, we were through with El Salvador. I thought, you know, I hadn't read about it in the newspapers for five or six years. I thought that was all taken care of." And then all of a sudden on the front pages of all the paper were these pictures of six priests that had been shot repeatedly, and all of a sudden it was back.) And people started saying, you know, maybe our

foreign policy wasn't such a success after all. You know, maybe things haven't calmed in El Salvador. In fact, there was another thing that happened.

: Well, I grew up outside of Lowell, and to me I think it seems that coming from Massachusetts the, uh . . .

McGOVERN:

*18:37 22 Mc - disrespect of killings odd;*  
Yeah, look, I'm from, all right. I'm <sup>calculated</sup> from Worster, Massachusetts, you know.

I, you know, I'm from a fairly, I'm the only son and there's, I have two sisters. If I was one of two sons, I mean, one of us would have probably gone into the priesthood. I mean, that's the way you were, you were raised. And, uh, always raised to be very respectful of priests. When I see a priest in the street here, you know, you're supposed to say, "Hi, Father, how are you doing?" You know, if you see a nun, "Hi, Sister." I mean, it's very much part of the culture, you know, of Massachusetts. And it's the same way in Boston, where Mokley's from. I mean, you're always

very, very, very respectful of, uh, you know, of the clergy. I mean, when you see them in a restaurant or at a, or at a party, you know, you always go up and, "Nice to see you, father," type of thing. So, I mean, there was that. But, you know, when we first got into this thing, when we went down there and went to the site, it really, it really wasn't, uh, so much kind of a Catholic issue for us. I mean, it became more that, of an issue that, "I can't believe someone did this." You know, I mean, it wasn't so, it wasn't, when you looked at how the violence, how terrible and violent the crime was. I mean, it was not only the priests they killed, but these two defenseless women who were just riddled with bullets, and, and these soldiers went on the campus, they killed them, and they stuck around. There were beer cans strewn, you know, near the bodies. I mean, that someone would go in and kill anybody like that, and then treat it so casually that you

just open up a can of beer, you know, and have it, and then toss it away, and then just kind of slowly walk away, it was, you know, it was just, it was shocking. And then, add to that, you know, the attitude of the military of the high command. The supposed, the best and the brightest, according to our embassy. You know, the guys who were the real good guys are in control of the military. You know, the guys who receive U.S. training, the guys who, you know, are really for peace, the guys who respect human rights, I mean, supposedly, and you sit with these people, and it was like, uh, you know,) one of the things, Mokley started, Mokley doesn't take a lot of notes, but during our meeting with the high command he, <sup>msg - disuspect for of h</sup> he kept on, he kept a little tally. 18:39:50  
 (And we had about a two-hour meeting with all the, with all the members of the Salvadoran high command, so his first meeting with them, and he said at the end of the meeting, he says, you know,

we sat here for two hours. He says, "We talked about this killing. You called it stupid. You called this bad political calculation. You called this unfortunate. But no one here ever said they were sorry. There was no kind of attitude that, you know, this was, this was just wrong. I mean, everybody, they talked about in terms of, 'Boy, we really blew this, I mean, you know, because you guys are down here now. You know, if we had handled this differently and you guys hadn't come down, it would have been okay.'" And it was, you know, it was really chilling to sit there with these guys and listen to them talk about this in very kind of cold and calculating terms. You know, not that, and there was no, no sorrow. And it's, and, I think, you know, that bothered Mokley's heart(?). You know, we're paying these guys salaries. We sent a lot of money to El Salvador, and these people live very well, these generals, because the U.S. taxpayers had to foot

the bill, and, you know, and think that we were basically paying the salaries of guys like that, you know, you just can't help but feel, you know, upset and angry about the whole thing. And then as it was we found out later, uh, not only were these guys just, you know, callous, you know, about the, and cavalier about the whole issue but, you know, the Minister of Defense himself and the Vice Minister of Defense were involved in this thing. So, you know, it's really, you know, it was all these things together, you know. You sit down there and you, you know, and you think about the whole case and about the extent of the involvement, and about the U.S. role in this whole thing, it really was, it was really quite upsetting.)

: Did, did you get the sense that, talking to the congressman, he had the sense that the reason he was hearing all this sort of calculating discussion was that this was not an uncommon occurrence. That the people they happened to kill

being international, internationals and visible to the rest of the world, perhaps (?) with the idea that they were going to eliminate people who were so concerned?

McGOVERN:

*18-42-28 the green light*  
(I think, I think that, uh, we had a meeting one night with, uh, with some mid-level officers. It was a secret meeting. And they, they said to Mokley, they said, "Why are you making such a fuss over this?" You know, "Why this case?" You know, "You, the United States government," and he meant the embassy, "You don't like these priests. I mean, You thought the Jesuits were subversives. You never said anything nice about them. You know, you went out of your way to tell everybody that they were, their political views were to the left, you know. You went out of your way to try to align them with the enemy. You know, you, the United States government, did that. You know, they're killed. What's the big deal? I mean, you didn't like them any more than we

did." Mokley was just kind of flabbergasted. I mean, he couldn't, he says, you know, "I can't believe I'm hearing this." But there is a logic to it. It's not only with the priests. It's with labor unionists, it's with students. You know, I remember going to El Salvador before the Jesuits were killed and, you know, you get your country briefing, and they always talk about, "Well, this union's aligned with the FMLN, this union's aligned with the FMLN." You know, and, "These priests, you know, they're all, they're in bed with the FMLN, and the Catholic church's human rights office, well, you know, they're too soft on the FMLN." You know, and in a place like El Salvador, I mean, that's basically kind of the, you know, degree that, you know, these guys were expendable.) And, uh, and, you know, and again, you know, it was upsetting to Mokley that, you know, to, to think that, you know, that in any way our government, you know, the United

States in any way, shape or form gave the impression that it was okay, you know, to kill some of these people. (I don't think anyone in our government, you know, wanted to see anybody dead, but it's, it's just our careless attitude. You know, it's really unforgivable,) when you look back on the last ten years. I always wondered if someone did a study, you know, on, you know, whether there was a correlation between people that the U.S. embassy denounced in some way, or in any public way or to any, to any military officer, and whether they ended up dead, you know, a month or two months or six months later. I mean, I bet there is some sort of a correlation. (Not that the U.S. is, you know, intended to in any, you know, direct way to, you know, to have any of these people end up dead, but it's our carelessness. In a place like El Salvador, you know, if you're called a communist, if you're called a, you know, a rebel leader, you know,

chances are your life is in jeopardy.  
 And that's the way it was, I mean,  
 before the peace, before the peace  
 treaty was signed.)

: We heard a joke down in El Salvador that  
 I guess is actually a pretty old joke  
 down there, which is, "Why is the United  
 States the only country that hasn't had  
 a coup?"

McGOVERN: Yeah.

: "In the Western Hemisphere." The answer  
 is, "It's the only country without an  
 American embassy."

McGOVERN: (Yeah. <sup>18:46:12 Sympathy for embassy</sup> Well, I get, as far as the  
 embassy goes) I, I spent an awful lot of  
 time personally with the, with officials  
 at the embassy over the last three  
 years, more time than I, that I think  
 that I can even, they came and  
 calculated in so many hours and probably  
 days and weeks. And for the most part I  
 have a great deal of respect for the  
 people that work there. And it's a,

it's a tough job. And they're very dedicated people and, for the most part, I think, they're decent people. But (it's tough when your orders from Washington are the, uh, you know, the impression that we want to give, that we want you to project down there was that, all's well, everything's fabulous here, you know, the human rights situation is comparable to Bermuda. You know, that's the image. And, you know, we're paying you to do that. And, so do it. And so when delegations come down, you know, they're giving you the party line. And when they don't, I mean, I know on occasions when there were individuals who didn't, you know, who, who, you know, who told the truth, and they get nailed.) You know, they get reeled in. And so it's, you know, and people, you know, a lot of times people say, "Geez, you know, that's terrible. Don't these guy have consciences?" Well, they do, but they also want to have a career. You know, a lot of these guys who were

working in human rights issues now are hoping some day to be an ambassador or hoping to get a better assignment next time, you know, maybe in a country that's not in the middle of a civil war. And so, you know, there's this kind of tendency to say, well, "Is this worth risking my career over, or should I just shut up, or just do what I'm supposed to do?" And I think that, you know, there's always, there's always been a struggle with a lot of people in the embassy between, you know, saying what they know is true and being honest about it and, you know, and worrying about covering their ass. I mean, and so it's, so it's, you know, I have respect for them because, and I also have a great deal of sympathy for them because I know they're in a tough position. And in the Jesuit case, you know, I have a, our ambassador, Ambassador Walker, was very much maligned by a lot of human rights groups, and the Jesuits in particular, and, you know, he's a friend

of mine and I think he's a good man and a decent man, and I think that, you know, he truly wanted to see justice in this case, and he tried the best he could, but he made a lot of mistakes along the way. He wasn't the best diplomat in the world, and he was presiding over an embassy that had all, you know, that had in, like, in one month seen the, uh, this Finastras(?) union bombing, the Jesuits were killed, and a massive offensive all at once. And, you know, trying to make sense out of it and trying to, you know, to do the right things, he was in a difficult spot. (18 48 41 sym for embassy) (But, again, you know, I think that the, that the, you know, a lot of people beat up on the embassy. I think the real problem is not so much the embassy but, you know, the people here in the pin-striped suits in the State Department who were basically giving the embassy officials their marching orders.)

: Well, that's the issue that Ambassador White told us he left over.

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McGOVERN: Right.

: The murder of the nuns. He was basically asked to certify that everything was being . . .

McGOVERN: Right.

: . . . done on the up and up and, in fact, it wasn't. That was the critical moment for him in terms of ending his career in foreign service. And I'm sure there were a lot of other people that may not have made the same decision, but that's the impression.

*Differences between SD & Embassy*

McGOVERN:

~~Emb people provided report 12-19-90~~  
Yeah. I mean, you know, if you look at our reports, I mean, there's a lot of detail in our, Mokley's, the Mokley Commission issued a number of reports. There's a lot of detail. And, um, a lot of that detail was given, you know, was provided to us by officials at the embassy who, you know, would not, couldn't go public, but agreed to tell us, you know, in a confidential way, in a private way. *(Emb people provided 12/19/90)* And so I'm, I have a lot

more sympathy for a lot of the embassy people than a lot of other people, you know, on the outside do, because I, a lot of these guys helped us out. A lot of these guys helped, you know, showed us things or provided us with details that helped us put the puzzle together. And, so we'll forever be grateful to those people at the embassy for doing that. It's the people here in Washington that, I think, missed the boat on El Salvador and missed the boat on the Jesuit case. We never got the impression that, that the truth was the ultimate goal, you know, up here. It was always, you know, "Damage control, damage control. We have a military aid ~~boat~~<sup>vote</sup> coming up. You know, damage control. How do we continue the military aid? How do we avoid a debate? How do we, you know, how do we keep everything under, under control?" And it was, I never really felt it was, they never took the role that Mokley thought they should have taken which is, you

know, someone should have said, "Listen, you son of a bitch. You know, you better turn over the people who killed the priests. We better know the whole truth. Otherwise, you're getting cut off, period." You know, there was never that kind of thread. And when we started, when we started getting into the investigation, and we started encountering a lot of resistance from the military, Mokley started saying, "Look, you guys better, you'd better shape up, because I'm going to cut your aid." And they were like, "Yeah, you know, we've heard that again and again. When the nuns were killed you told us that. When the, you know, when the, in the Sheridan case you told us that. You've told us that a thousand times. You know, you're not going to cut our aid. You know, if you cut our aid, you know, the left will reign, and you don't want that." Mokley said, "Well, we're going to cut your aid. You know, I'm telling you right now." And they didn't

believe us, and then we did. Mokley brought an amendment to the floor, and cut their aid in half. And, you know, all of a sudden there were, "Gee, they cut our aid. They really meant it." And then we started to see things move a little bit. Not as much as we wanted to, but every time we would cut their aid, they'd do a little bit more. I mean, they'd throw us a few carrots. Not anywhere, not what we needed, but there was movement. And I think, uh, you know, it made you think, you know, why didn't we get tougher ten years ago? You know, why didn't we play hardball ten years ago? We would have probably ended up, you know, with a peace settlement, and we would have ended up with a lot less dead, you know, had we done that.)

: Why didn't the U.S. government, in your estimation?

true character of the people that we supported, you know, has come out in the Jesuit case, I mean, very clear. You know, the great hero of the armed forces, the Minister of Defense, you know, was smack in the middle of this whole thing. The Vice Minister of Defense was involved. The entire army, you know, there was a massive cover-up in the army. No one thought it was important, to this day, to tell the truth about that case, or any other case. And, you know, to think that, you know, that we're siding with those people, you know, is really sad. It's not what this country's all about. It's not what we're, at least not what we're supposed to be about. And I never thought that, I always thought that our policy down there was, was misguided from Day One. (I mean, I do not want, I do not wish, I don't think anybody wished that the FMLN would win or anything like that. I think what people had hoped was that, you know, some sort

of a negotiated settlement similar to one that's been achieved could have been achieved a long time ago. But under the Reagan and Bush administrations, negotiations, the word "negotiation" was a dirty word until just recently. It was a dirty word until after the Jesuits got killed. And the Jesuits, as tragic as that was, that was the turning point, you know, for the peace process. That's when everybody started to get serious. That's when the army, you know, when we cut their rate in half the army knew that, you know, the, you know, the days of the free lunch were about to go away, that Congress was getting sick of them. And I think that when the FMLN failed to overthrow the government in their offense in 1989, I think they realized that, you know, we're not going to witness war any time soon, probably not ever. I mean, this could go on forever and ever. So, I think, you know, it just helped create a climate that I think led to these, the peace agreement.)

: We talked about going down there for the first time, and before that about the perception here in Congress that, you know, "We've finally got it straightened out down there," before that. Will you just tell me what it was like, because I recently had the same experience, to go there for the first time? What, what kind of preconceptions in terms of what the conditions were down there had changed once you saw?

McGOVERN: Well, for Mokley, I mean, it was, I had been there a few times before, before the Jesuits had been killed, so I'd been there a few times, and I'd spent some time in the country. And, you know, I had, I had a pretty good idea what the, you know, the landscape of the country, and I knew most of the players. For Mokley, his first trip down there, you know, I think he was impressed that it was one of the most beautiful countries physically, I mean, geographically, that he had ever been to. I mean, it's a beautiful country. And, and, you know,

and, how tragic it was that this beautiful country was just being totally disrupted by a violent war, and that, (18:58:19 *starts the interview*) and I think that that's what hit him the most. And still, it hits me the most when I think about those days, is that the tension that you felt when you get off the plane, and you could hear the bombs going off in the background, and occasional gunfire and, you know, when we first went down after the Jesuits were killed, there still was a curfew. And there were, you know, roadstops everywhere you went. You'd drive by a bus that some soldiers pulled over and they had all the people lined up and looking at their papers and questioning them. And, you know, you just, it was a very oppressive place, and I also think that when we went to visit the site where the Jesuits were killed, you know, you can hear about these things, people can tell you stories, you know, "Six priests got killed," and they can describe it to you, but somehow it's

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18:59:10

different when you're there, you know, when you're standing on the spot where it happened, and where you see the bloodstains and you, and you just, you know, you get sick to your stomach because it's just so, so hard to comprehend. ) And, you know, and I think that's, you know, it's hard to put all these things in words, but the fact of the matter is, you know, being there, you know, and just, you know, realizing that you're standing on the ground where all this happened, you know, you just, it has this, you know, real strong kind of impact on you. It's hard to describe, but it's, it's complicated.

: It's hard to sort of compartmentalize?

McGOVERN: Yeah.

: We're going to change the tape.

TAPE 41 - JIM McGOVERN INTERVIEW

: Let's go back now to November <sup>1989</sup> and talk about what transpired when Congressman Mokley was first asked to head up inquiries, and how things began to come out.

McGOVERN:

~~19:31:18 Mc~~ ~~how that began~~  
Well, when we were first asked, you know, we tried to figure out what the hell we were supposed to do. You know, what do you do? I mean, we're not sure, our (?) are not Scotland Yard. We don't know anything about investigating, you know, murders. How do you, how do we begin? And, uh, and so we spent basically the month of December just doing a lot of reading, stuff that was available, just to find out who all the players were, and a little bit about El Salvador's history, and about, you know, some of the, some of the previous crimes. And we met with a lot of government officials, people from, you know, from former administrations. And we sat down with everybody from people like Bob White to Elliot Abrams, just to

19:31:18

get their perspectives, to see what they were thinking about all this stuff. And then we planned a trip, a staff trip in early January, then a trip from Mokley in February. And we basically, you know, that's how we kind of began the whole thing. But <sup>how they... C.C.</sup> it was interesting, the month of December was a, kind of a tumultuous month because there was a potential witness, this woman, Lucia Serna, who was, supposedly had information about the case, and there was an unfortunate incident in which it was arranged for her to come to the United States, and the United States government did not behave with great sensitivity and wisdom, and what our State Department did was they, she comes to, she's scared out of her mind, and they fly her to Miami where she's brought into a room with six FBI guys and they, you know, and an embassy official, and they hook her up to a polygraph tests. I think she thought she was going to be electrocuted, and

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19:33:00

asking her, "What did you see? What did you see?" And she said, "I saw some army guys that night." And they put her up to a polygraph test, and she was nervous, she was worried about her child and her husband, and they kept on asking her, "What did you see? What did you see?" She says, "I saw, I saw the Army do it." She says, "I can't really, I didn't see any faces, but they were wearing visors." And, you know, she described the uniforms. And this went on for several days. And then they bring in a Salvadoran colonel to interrogate her. So this time she just panics, and they said, "What did you see?" She says, "Nothing. I saw nothing." And it was a real unfortunate episode, because I think it dissuaded other potential witnesses from coming forward. I mean, people, it left the impression that the United States government was trying to shake anybody, you know, who pointed a finger at the military. It looked like we were doing

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19:33:53

the work of the military. I mean, I, we've talked to the FBI about this, I reviewed the transcripts and the whole thing. I don't think that's what was, I don't think that was the point of it. I think what happened was there was, you know, the United States government showed great, a great ability, you know, to screw a situation up. I mean, we were terribly insensitive and very incompetent. It was just, it was a botched deal, and I think it, I think it had a bad impact on, you know, trying to squeeze the truth out of people. But as late as January 2nd, our government was still suggesting that maybe FMLN had done it.)

19:34:30

: Tell me again, and, I was going to mention that it might be, I know you're sitting there and all of us are sort of sitting around here, it's easy to just look around.

McGOVERN: Right.

: But later on it looks like you're kind of . . .

McGOVERN: I'm spaced out.

: For somebody to look at, I just wanted to caution you about that. But, could you just talk a little bit about this woman and who she was, because I think for our audience it would be important to know who she was and where she was the night of October 16th.

McGOVERN:

*19:35:40 Lucia Serna*  
Well, Lucia Serna was a housekeeper at the, for the Jesuits. And since there was an offensive going on, she spent the night, you know, on campus. And she was there the night the priests were killed, and was awoken by gunfire, and then she went and looked out the window and she, she saw, you know, these army guys, and she heard voices, and she was able to hear a few phrases, but she could recognize them because they had visors and because of the uniform and that kind of stuff. So she was, you know, that's all she saw, really. You know, there

*19:35:35*

was nothing more. I mean, she's a woman who had almost no education, a very poor woman, had a little daughter, and she, you know, she told one of the priests that I, you know, "I saw this, I heard this." And, uh, you know, and then, you know, from there the story goes on, and it was decided that she would be taken, be brought to the United States, and the Jesuits in the United States would take care of her. And what nobody knew, because the U.S. embassy never told anybody, was that when she got off the plane in Miami she was going to be greeted by FBI men, and they were to question her. And it was, you know, again, a very unfortunate event, and it shouldn't have happened, and it was just, it showed unbelievable incompetent on behalf of our government. I mean, it was just terrible.)

:

But this was just the beginning.

McGOVERN:

(another ex... Aules 19 37 6  
This was just the beginning. This is like the, this is in December. And on

January 2, 1990, I remember this date, we had a meeting with, our first meeting with the ambassador, Ambassador Walker, in Washington, and with the whole team of State Department officials. They were coming in to see Mokley for the first time. And they came in with the charts and with, you know, all kinds of maps and pictures and, you know, all kinds of props. And the bottom line was, you know, according to them, was that it's very possible that the rebels had killed the priests, you know. And, uh, we can't prove it, but, you know, rebels have a tendency to dress up in military uniforms, you know. Think about it, this would have been a great thing for them to do because it would make the army look bad, and that's what they wanted and, you know, on and on and on. And Mokley sat there like, "You know, you've got to be crazy. You know, maybe, maybe you're right. I don't know. We'll see. We're going to look into this, but it doesn't make any sense

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to me." And that very day in El Salvador where the ambassador and his team were telling us that, a U.S. Army officer in the embassy came forward and told his superior that, "Look, you know, three weeks ago my buddy in the Salvadoran Army told me that this guy, this guy and this guy were involved, and, you know, the military did it." And, uh, so, you know, and at that, and what happened, what happened with that information, which is another example of incompetence, was that, you know, this poor U.S. officer comes forward with this bombshell, and rather than contacting the U.S. Ambassador, rather than having their, you know, embassy team briefing on, "Geez, what do we do with this? How do we handle this? You know, this guy directly, one of our guys is saying right up front that the Salvadoran Army is involved in this, how do we handle this?" Rather than doing any of the things that I think a sensible person would do, our people,

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our military group advisor at the embassy, took this young officer and marched him over to see the Minister of Defense of El Salvador and sat him down with him. And I think he was Army Chief of Staff at the time, General, now General Ponce, and sat him down with him and said, "General, this guy says that, you know, this happened, this happened, this happened." You know, and Ponce looks at him and says, "Well, you know, are you sure?" He says, "Yes. Colonel . . ." He named the colonel who told him this. He says, "Colonel Abulus told me this whole story." So Ponce, you know, sends one of his advisors out to get Colonel Abulus, and an hour-and-a-half later, I'm sure after Abulus was well-briefed, you know, no one from the United States accompanied this emissary to get Abulus, Abulus comes back and says, "I don't even know what this guy's talking about. He's lying. I never said that." ) And, uh, so, you know, again, it's just another example, I

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think, of, you know, it could have been handled better. *?*

: And this is typical of the kind of responses you got from our military throughout.

McGOVERN:

Yeah. *(19:40 so they didn't quite* The military, the military, with us, they didn't quite know what to make of Jim Mokley. I mean, Jim Mokley is a, you know, tough, South Boston politician. I mean, a former boxer. I mean, who's, you know, kind of very lively and he's, you know, he's kind of very much like Tip O'Neill. They didn't quite know what to make of this guy. I mean, when he came down. And he's not at all, you know, skilled in the art of diplomacy. I mean, he's just very rough around the edges. I mean, when he says, "We went down to El Salvador we looked like the Masons on vacation." I mean, we stood out like a sore thumb. There was, everybody was looking, you know, who, what's this, the circus? I mean, and, uh, you know, he's very loud and

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boisterous, "Hi, how are you? How you doin'?' Nice to see you." You know. But he's also very direct. I mean, there's no, no beating around the bush. And when we sat down with the members of the high command, you know, and they basically told us, you know, that they were, you know, deaf, dumb or blind the night of the murders and, you know, nobody in the military saw anything, you know, and they went through this whole story about how, you know, they can't believe any of them were involved, Mokley says, you know, Mokley very directly said to them, he says, "You're lying to me. I mean, I could see that you're, you know, you can't bullshit an old bullshitter, General, and I know you're lying to me. So, you know, you got a choice. You can either tell me the truth. We can either clear this thing up, or you lose your aid. You know, it's up to you. But, you know, don't feed me any more of this crap, because I'm not buying it." And, uh,

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and they're all like, "Geez, you know, you don't talk to me that way. I'm the, you know, I'm the first Minister of Defense," or "I'm the army Chief of Staff," or "I'm the minister of Defense." He's like, "You know, you can talk to me that way, too. I don't care. I mean, if you think my comments to you are bad and insulting, you should come to one of my town meetings in South Boston. I mean, this is nothing compared with what my constituents say to me. So, I mean, let's just be honest. I mean, tell me what you think. I mean, tell me the truth. That's all I want. And then I'm out of here. You won't have to see me any more.") And, uh, you know, so, and with our embassy officials, too. I'll give you one example, and the American colonel (the American officer that I mentioned who came forward with information that he had been told by the Salvadoran officer that these, you know, the Salvadoran Army was involved in the killings, he

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had, we had found out that he had put everything in writing in an affidavit form. So Mokley asked Ambassador Walker at a meeting, he says, "You know, I understand that this young American Army officer put an affidavit together." And Walker said, "Yes." He says, Mokley said, "Well, I'd like to see it." And Walker said, "I have to check with Washington. I'll let you know tomorrow morning." So the next morning we're having breakfast and, you know, we knew something was wrong because the conversation was turned on, you know, to baseball, you know. And we weren't talking about the murders. And Mokley said, "Where's my affidavit?" And Walker says, "You can't have it. The Department of Defense, the Secretary of Defense says you can't see it." Mokley went, "Jesus, you know, I mean, you know, how the hell am I supposed to get anything done if you're not going to show me some of these things." So, you know, we finished our breakfast and

Mokley said to me, "Come on, we're going to go for a little ride." So we get in a cab, and we go to visit the military investigator of the case. The military was doing their own investigation. And we had a very tough meeting with him the day before and he, you know, so Mokley came to him and said, "Look, I want to apologize for being a little rough with you yesterday. I didn't mean to yell at you. But, anyway, I just wanted to say that you're a good man and, you know, I appreciate giving us the time." So the guy was all smiles, like. "Look, I got a question for you, though. Remember that U.S. officer, you know, who had that information that the Salvadoran military was involved?" He says, "Yes." "He prepared an affidavit. You've seen that affidavit, haven't you?" And the colonel in the army goes, "Yes, I have." And he says, "Do you have it here?" He says, "Yes, I do." Mokley says, "Do you mind if I just look at it for a minute because I left, I left my copy in my

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room." So the guys comes out with the affidavit. And Mokley says, "Gee, you know, these aren't my reading glasses. You don't have a xerox machine here, do you?" And he says, "Yeah, I do." He says, "Can't you just xerox me? We'll be talking about other things." You know, so he xeroxes it, and Mokley puts it in his pocket and says, "Oh, I got to go. I can't stay around here much longer, but nice seeing you." We leave, and we go, we see, we go back to the embassy, and Mokley says, "Mr. Ambassador, tell the Secretary of Defense he can go to hell. I got the affidavit from the Salvadoran military. You know, I mean, it's just, it's, I mean, how ridiculous it is that we're going to get this from the military when my own government won't give it to me." You know, we had a couple of those problems with our own government. They were, in the early stages they didn't want to give us anything. They wouldn't

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show us a thing. They got better as time went on.

: What did it say about the U.S., you know, the Administration's position on uncovering the truth and they would give that affidavit to the Salvadoran military and not to their own congressional investigation?

McGOVERN:

(<sup>1946 State dept answers</sup> Well, I think what it says is that the, what it says is that the Administration was more worried about saving face and saving a policy that was wrong than it was about getting to the truth.) And, you know, and that's just, and that's sad. I mean, we're talking about a case involving the murder of six priests, and I mean, you know, there was, it was just inconceivable to us that, uh, we were playing all these kind of games and going through all these kind of gyrations just to get our own government to cooperate with us. We, like I said, I mean, there were individuals that did, in our government. (<sup>State dept. 1946 39</sup> You know, there were

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some very good people in the embassy who helped us out, including the ambassador. You know, even though I mentioned a negative story about him, you know, he was very helpful. But there were others, the people up here, I mean, you know, getting just the most basic information was like, you know, pulling teeth. It was incredible. And we were the task force that was appointed by the Speaker of the House to follow all of this. I mean, it wasn't like we were, you know, The Kumbaya Human Rights group from Ann Arbor, Michigan. We were the Congress coming down to look at this stuff.) And they, it took them a while to, we had to do some, we had to threaten them a couple of times with, you know, subpoenas, you know, and press conferences and all this kind of stuff, you know, just to get them to move. (We had submitted to them a list of about 20 questions that we wanted answered, and, uh, we submitted to them in December. And when we were going down to El

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19:47:37 State dept answers...

Salvador in February we were taking like 13 congressmen with us. And the State Department wanted to put people on the plane. So Mokley said, "You know, I don't, I don't really want any State Department people on the plane. But, you know, if you really think it's important, you know, fine, you know. But, you know, we're not going to, we're not going to let them know what to do. We're going to do anything, we're going to do our own thing, basically. And, so, the day before we leave, we still haven't gotten any answers to the question. So Mokley calls up the Assistant Secretary of State, and he says, "Okay, how many guys do you have coming on this trip with us?" "We have six coming with you on this trip." Mokley says, "Okay, you get zero coming with us on this trip now. None of you are going to be on the plane. I will stand on the plane and throw those guys off if they come up and show up tomorrow to get on this plane to go to El

Salvador." He says, "Unless, unless they come armed with the answers to my questions." And, you know, the Assistant Secretary says, "Oh, well, that's just not fair. We don't have the time." He says, "Look. You've had two, two-and-a-half months to answer those questions. They're very simple questions, you know. You should be able to give us the answers. If you can't, those bastards can't come with us." The next morning, you know, the State Department entourage comes with, you know, big boxes of all these questions answered and all this cable traffic that we were going to be able to review on the plane, so they got to come with us, and we got our information. But, again, it's incredible, you know, to kind of do those things. You know, we're supposed to be on the same side.)

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: It's kind of mind-boggling to imagine. Going back to the military, as you began to uncover some of the duplicity, one

thing that strikes me is the captain  
who . . .

WOMAN: Captain (?)?

: No, who testified that he had heard, one  
of the intelligence officers who  
testified that he heard about the  
killings on commercial radio.

McGOVERN: Right.

: And announced it to a meeting of . . .

McGOVERN: Right.

: . . . intelligence officers.

McGOVERN: And the captain, the captain heard him  
on a military radio. He got the news of  
the Jesuit killing on the military  
radio. The army was trying to basically  
say that they knew nothing about the  
crime until it was reported in the  
media. The fact of the matter is, we  
found out that the military officers who  
were on the scene, you know, that  
everything was being communicated over  
military radio. It wasn't commercial

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radio. Everybody knew what was going on. Everybody knew the story. They, you know, it was, I mean, <sup>(19:50:46)</sup> you have to understand, ~~the unbelievable story that~~ the University of Central America, where it's located, it's an area, you know, the intelligence agency is like across the street, all the military families live nearby. That area was heavily guarded during the, during the offensive. I mean, during the night the Jesuits were killed, I mean, there were literally hundreds and hundreds of soldiers in that area. And, uh, and the people who killed the Jesuits, I mean, left from the, uh, you know, military school, and went to the United States, and they had to go through some roadblocks. And, so, the people who let them through had to know what was going on. They go to the University, and they're in no hurry, I mean, it's not one bullet in the head and out they go. They were in no hurry. You know, hundreds of bullets, you know, are shot off. They shoot up a flare on

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this guy. I mean, you know, what, you know, what, I mean, again, all these military officers are all around, you know, all these soldiers are all around the campus. A flare goes up, I mean, it's nighttime. You have clear night. And nobody sees it? Nobody can tell us that they saw that? You know, nobody can, nobody heard the bullets? And nobody remembers any of these guys going in and out of the, uh, out of the, uh, out of the military school? I mean, there's a logbook, but that was destroyed so that, you know, they couldn't, there was no hard evidence to prove that they, who came in and who left. Someone, someone had the foresight, I guess, to light a match to it, and it's disappeared. You know, no one remembers any military, passing any military blockades? They don't remember anything. That's what they claim. It's impossible. I mean, you know, it was just impossible. And, you know, and I think that's one of the things that had

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Mokley so annoyed, you know, when he sat down with members of the high community, it's like, you know, look, I'm not a fool. I mean, you know, and I know you're not a fool, and I know that you're not, you know, I know that there's, I know that nothing happens in this country, dealing with the military, that you, as the Chief of the Military, don't know about. I mean, you are, you're in charge. And yet, uh, now here you're telling me that, you know, everybody had amnesia that night? I mean, they can't remember a thing? He says, I don't believe it.) And, and what ended up happening, I mean, we, we ended up studying the issue in a series of reports that, you know, the, kind of, what we thought it was, you know, you go down, you know, your usual report, you know, and you wait and see what happened, and you go back down again and see whether or not, you know, anything happened. And we did a series of these reports just trying to, you know, to get

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people to, you know, to contradict each other or to, you know, or to encourage people to come forward to us or to, and it worked to a certain extent. (I mean, *19:53:47 trial: wrap up* you know, there was a trial. You know, nine guys were indicted. Only two were convicted. The trial was kind of a mockery of sorts. During the trial you had a big protest outside the courtroom chanting that the Jesuits were all terrorists, led by an army colonel, which is, you know, comforting. And then you had an Air Force plane buzz by the courtroom. I was told that they were doing that because they got lost. It was not intentional. You know, but if you believe that, you'll believe, you know, that I can now sell you the Golden Gate Bridge. I mean, it's just incredible. And only two of the guys got convicted. It's, there was a major step forward by Salvadoran, in justice terms. I mean, it never happened before. You know, I mean, a colonel actually got convicted. And so, I mean,

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it was something. But it wasn't, it wasn't the whole truth. And what had us concerned is, you know, we had, we had met literally with hundreds of Salvadoran officers during our two years of looking into this case. You know, we had secret meetings, you know, that, you know, put some of these James Bond movies, you know, to shame. I mean, they were just, some of the things you had to go through to meet some of these people were just incredible. But we had pieced together what we thought was the truth, and the truth was that, that in addition to the guys who pulled the trigger that there was a meeting to plan the killings which was attended by, among others, the Minister of Defense and the Vice Minister of Defense. And that the order to actually, you know, the guy who was really instigating this was at the time the head of the Air Force, General Bustillo. And we, after two-and-a-half years of kind of investigating this thing, I mean, we

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were very confident that that was what happened. I mean, as Mokley said, "You know, Jeez, I mean, I feel so sure about this, I mean, I'd bet my house on it. I mean, that's how, I know this is the truth." But we couldn't get anybody to go to the judge because they didn't believe they would live, you know. And they, we couldn't get anybody, they were afraid not only for themselves but for their families. There were people that, you know, people who were seen with us were threatened. Five members of the Salvadoran military, I mean, there was a great deal of fear. Uh, you know, we were trying to see whether we could work out some way to maybe get them asylum here in the United States, or how do we, how do we get this thing going? And after the trial, you know, one, something happened that really disturbed us, and that was that the United States government basically, as soon as that trial was over was, like, "It's over. We're done. Every, this is, isn't this

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fabulous that we had at trial. Actually, people were convicted, isn't that wonderful? You know, what a great day for justice in El Salvador. Isn't this fabulous? But let's just end it. You know, no more, no more." And basically that was it. After that trial, the U.S. government didn't do a thing. And it became also clear that the Salvadoran investigators were not going to do a thing. They wanted to let this case go. So here we had all this information, you know, with these names, who we knew were involved. And so Mokley issued one final report, basically saying, you know, I mean, "I know these guys, I know these guys are not really coming to trial. You know, they're never going to serve a day in jail. You know, but for the sake of history, for the sake of the truth, you know, the people of El Salvador deserve to know who's behind this, and these are them." And, you know, we released this bombshell, it was on the front page of

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The New York Times, and it was, caused a big stir in El Salvador. The United States State Department was silent. No comment. Christiani, silent, no comment. The only people who said anything were those we named, who all said, "No, it's not true.") But, uh, you know, at least, you know, they may not go to jail, but at least when they got to a restaurant, uh, someone, you know, the lady at the table is going to say, you know, "Those are the bastards that killed those priests." And, you know, and not, "Oh, my General, how are you doing?" It's going to be, you know, I mean, at least they're going to know that these are the guys who did this kind of thing. And it's not much, but it's something. And for Mokley, it was very, very important to him that the guys who did it didn't get away with it, you know, that everything, it was important to him that everyone knew that these were the guys who did it, that they were capable of doing this. And,

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uh, and so we named them. And there's a, you know, there's a truth commission that's coming over. They report probably in January or February. I expect that, you know, they will hopefully, you know, concur with much of what we said, and hopefully add a lot more detail. I mean, they, we operated on no money and no professional staff other than, you know, the congressman's immediate staff. The truth commission is compiled of some of the, it's compiled of some of the foremost Human Rights experts investigators, you know, has several million dollars to, you know, to do some investigating. So we'll see what they come up with.

: This case . . . We're going to change the tape.

TAPE 42 - JIM McGOVERN INTERVIEW

: So this report came out, you know, about the course of law . . .

McGOVERN: Right.

: . . . in the courts. But this was the first time that the (?) of the military had been challenged.

McGOVERN:

(<sup>page 42 22 30 87</sup>  
*Mock made criticism*  
I'll tell you what, one of the, one of the great contributions Jim Mokley made to El Salvador was he made it acceptable, you know, to say critical things about the military. And he did it because, you know, he would say something and, you know, people had to react to it. You know, and, you know, people, and, you know, there'd be radio shows and TV shows and newspaper, you know, stories, and people reacting to Mokley saying that the high command is involved in a cover-up.) Some people would say yes, some people would say no. But over a period of time, you know, we, we read the papers in El Salvador almost every day, you know, for two years. And

it all kind of reached a pivotal point in July of 19-- , let's see, July of '91, Mokley went back to El Salvador and he was invited to give an address at the University of Central America where the priests were killed. And we had talked about, you know, what would you, what are you going to say? And, uh, you know, and we had talked about it, you know, for a couple of weeks beforehand, and we had worked and re-worked and re-worked the speech, and it sounded great till we get down there. And I was like, "Oh, boy, are you really going to say this? You know, here, in El Salvador?" I mean, it's, you were trying to figure out the right balance, you know. I mean, can I come, can I go down in a public forum like that and get out and, you know, criticize the military head-on. And, you know, and what can you say about your own government in a foreign country. I mean, there's all kinds of rules and protocol. You're not supposed to criticize the United States when

you're overseas. So, you know, we were all very worried about, you know, the right thing to say. But what we finally decided to do was just basically, you know, say what, you know, he wanted to say what he felt. And he, I thought it was one of the more powerful speeches I've ever heard. And he said all the right things, I thought. He talked about, you know, that this war's not going to end, and he'd deal with the issue of military impunity. I mean, you know, you want the rebels to lay down their arms and come back and join the political process here, but how are they going to do that, and how are they going to have confidence that they're not going to be shot when they walk into San Salvador, you know, if you're not willing, you know, to hold those who are accountable for killing these six priests and two women? You're not going to, you know, if you're not going to do what's right with these people. I mean, you know, you have to understand that

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there's a correlation between this case, you know, and whether or not you're going to, you know, you're going to be credible when you talk to the rebels about peace. And, you know, and then he also did something that . . . ( break in tape ) Okay.

: I want to pick it up with discussing the going, you know, you were talking about how (?) started to give his speech, and put yourself in a position of the rebels giving up their (?). But then you went on from there to describe a (?).

McGOVERN: You know, he, it rests himself to the members of the military.

: Tell me again where this is?

McGOVERN: WE're at the, we're at the University of Central America, and he's giving a speech, and at one point, you know, he said, "I want to talk to the military." You know. And he said, you know, they were very good and patriotic individuals who served in the Salvadoran armed

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forces. And I've met a lot of them. I mean, they're all, there are some really good people. He says, but there's a major problem here, and that is that, he says, and I was talking to General Ponce about it, who was the Minister of Defense, earlier today, and I said, "You know, General, I think, uh, you know, I think there's a prob--, I think you have an institutional problem here within the military. (22:34:45) It's more than just the actions of a few individuals, you know, that's in question here. It's the fact that the entire institution feels it appropriate to cover up this crime. That's an institutional problem. It's more than just, you know, a couple of individuals that went haywire." Mokley's speech And he says, and General Ponce said to me, "No! You know, it's just a couple of bad apples. It's not an institutional problem." And Mokley kind of went down the list, you know, what, you know, ticked off the list of, you know, the cover-up, you know, and about how, you

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know, despite the fact that there were hundreds of soldiers on the scene of the crime, you know, the night this thing happened, and that hundreds of bullets were fired off and flares were shot up in the sky, not one single individual, not one single member of the armed forces came forward with any information. And even when questioned by the judge they lied and lied and lied. Nobody said anything, you know, in a formal way, to implicate, you know, the army in this whole thing. And when, and Mokley said, "And when, you know, and when you're, and when members of the armed forces, you know, are taught, when it's instilled in them, when they're ordered to, you know, be silent in the face of these crimes," he said, "General, you have an institutional problem on your hands." And, uh, I mean, and that, that line about, you know, that the institution, you know, has the problems, became the subject of a massive debate, you know, for months.

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And, uh, and what came out of that was that, you know, people, not just, you know, not just critics of the military but, you know, members of the, you know, right wing, you know, parties, and, you know, people who, you know, who always kind of allied themselves with the military, were all, were all beginning to question, publicly, you know, in the papers and on TV and, you know, on radio that, you know, geez, we got to clean up our mil--, we have to clean up our act here. You know, the military is out of control. We need to do something to bring it into line. And I think, you know, and that I think helped create an atmosphere where you had, you know, where you could have a peace agreement signed, you know, where the military felt that, uh, you know, the time had come to, you know, to basically subvert a little bit, to the, uh, submit a little bit to the civilian government. You know, there's still a little way to go, but I think that whole debate that

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was around the Jesuit case and the military's role, and how they behaved is, you know, as tragic as that whole thing was, it did, it created a dialogue, you know, it opened up the press a little bit. I mean, suddenly there was people who were reading articles and seeing things on TV that they hadn't seen in ten years, and, uh, and I think that was an important service. The other thing about that speech that I'll always remember, we, it was Mokley's kind of candid remark about the U.S. attitude toward this whole case. (22:37:45) We had met with, I'm not going to mention his name, but a very powerful U.S. Army commander in Central America the week before we went down. And he said to Mokley, "You know, you have to understand, you know, you and I are, you know, in the culture that we were raised in, this is, what happened here is, you know, with the priests, it's offensive, it's gross, it's disgusting. But, you know, in El Salvador, you know, I mean,

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this is part of the culture. I mean, violence is, you know, it's not unusual. You know, you got to, you know, people are used to it." And, uh, so Mokley, without naming the officer, said, "You know, I'm tired of being told by my government that, you know, violence is just part of the culture down here," he said, "because I don't believe it is." He says, "And I also think it takes a hell of a nerve for anybody from my government, you know, to say that, you know. The United States of America, which, you know, exports, you know, the largest amount of weapons, you know, all over the world, we have the biggest military budget of anybody in the world, we have the highest crime rate of any country in the western world, and here we are saying that you're a violent culture. I mean, the fact of the matter is that, you know, you don't deserve this kind of treatment any more than we don't deserve this kind of treatment. I mean, you know, you should, you know,

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22:38:51

you deserve better." And that was another powerful moment because, I think, for the people in the audience, they were, there were people who had traveled hours and hours, you know, from the, we had, we met some people from Santa Marta, which is way on the other side of the country, who travelled to hear this speech in this kind of big auditorium. You know, real, people who had nothing. But they all came up to him afterwards and said, "You know, when you said that, you know, I think, we knew you understood. And you know exactly what's happening here. You know, you're right. You know, we don't deserve to be treated like this. We don't deserve this violence, you know, any more than, you know, the people of the United States wouldn't want to be treated this way." And, uh, it was a great, you know, it was moment, and it was a powerful moment. Afterwards we had a, the Jesuits had a little private reception for Mokley in the quarters

where the priests had lived, where the assassinated priests had lived. And we had a Salvadoran meal, and then Mokley ended the evening by singing, you know, about four or five Irish barroom ballads. And all these Jesuits were like, "Geez, you know, this is our, this is the guy who's helping us out?" ( he laughs ) But it was, but it was good.

22:40:06

: Having met some of the Jesuits down there, I think they kind of were pretty comfortable with that.

McGOVERN: Yeah. No, they, they were, that's the thing, you know. They're not, you know, I don't know, I guess you, we kind of thought that that might be kind of stuffy or, you know, maybe, you know, you have a lot of very heavy, deep conversations on theology and stuff like that. You know, they were into kind of the barroom ballads just as much as Mokley was, so there was, they really are, you know, they were really a

22:40:41

wonderful bunch of people. I mean, I, we got to know the guys who came down to replace the assassinated priests pretty well, and they were all, you know, really, you know, wonderful people. I mean, just, you know, great human beings and they're just, you know, people, you know, none of them are from El Salvador but they're all, they love El Salvador, you know, and they have a commitment to the people there that, uh, I think it's every bit in the tradition of the guys who were killed.

22:41:05

: What do you think the role of the Jesuits is down there? I mean, what seemed the average level of education and poverty and the theme in which the church is held? What, what do you think their, their role is now?

McGOVERN: Well, I think, I think that the Jesuits down there now have a, you know, an extremely important role to play in that the university is really, I mean, the, the, you know, best educational

institution in that entire country, and it has a lot to offer. I mean, you know, to meet the challenges that come in, you know, in peacetime, you're going to need an educated population. I mean, you're going to need people who know how to organize people who, you know, are experienced in agriculture and in medicine and in law and you name it. I mean, and the challenge of the university now is to, to get out there and to try to bring people in and help create an educated population, or a population that can help lift El Salvador out of its current mess. I think during the war, you know, the Jesuits, you know, played the role that, uh, which I think was an important role, and that is, you know, going out to some of these people and saying, you know, you're just as good as that guy who's living in that mansion. You know, you're every bit as good as the, you know, as the general. You know, and no, you don't deserve to have your son shot,

22:42:19

22:42:45 the Jesuits' message

you know, your daughter raped. And no, you don't deserve to have your, you know, your house bombed and torn apart. I mean, you have rights. I mean, you're a human being, and we're all human beings, and we all, we all need to live with each other and we all need to respect each other. I mean, I think that was their message that, I mean, you know, there was nothing more complicated, and it's not a radical message. I guess by Salvadoran standards, you know, it was. I think that's why those priests died. They were killed because, you know, the message of, you know, you're all, everybody's entitled to be treated with respect. Everybody's entitled to certain rights. And there was nothing wrong with fighting for those rights. In fact, it's not, there's not only nothing wrong with it, I mean, you have an obligation to fight for those rights. And, uh, that was the, that was the radical message that, uh, that had the

22:43:03

22:43:28

army so up in arms over, you know, over the Jesuits. And, uh, I think that's what they died for.)

: Now that, having come to the point where there are peace accords and there is the possibility that, uh, everyone, all the parties, the Salvadoran, the Jesuits, the military, and the efforts to re-direct there, what, uh, what are the specific challenges and dangers and opportunities that you see for, basically I think really for the United States, for our new government.

McGOVERN:

(22:44:23 *peace accords imp*  
There's a couple of things. One is, uh, we have to make sure that the peace accords are implemented fully and faithfully. And that means that all these promises about a civilian police force about, uh, reforming the judiciary and cleansing the army, armed forces, all those things have to happen. You know, making sure that people are re-trained, and that there's agreements on giving out land, all those things have

22:44:22

to be implemented. If they're not, this whole thing falls apart. So part of the job of the United States is to make sure that everybody sticks to their parts of the bargain in the next, in the coming months. That's number one. The other challenge here, quite frankly, is, you know, trying to keep, you know, trying to keep Congress interested. You know, El Salvador's not a sexy issue any more because, you know, you're not reading about six priests getting killed, and you're not, you know, it's not a major war, there's not, you know, ten thousand bodies a year, you know, dead as a result of violence, and that kind of stuff. You're not reading about it. So there's a, and the way, unfortunately the way Congress tends to operate, the way a government tends to operate up here, if you don't read about it, you know, there's no problem down there, and so there's a tendency not to, you know, to want to go toward another issue. And I think it's really important that we

22:45:01

not forget El Salvador. I mean, we, we spent billions of dollars, you know, essentially destroying that country. We invested heavily in that war. I mean, and we, that country is, I mean, you know, you've seen it, the country has been destroyed, essentially, because of that war. You know, we need to spend at least some millions, I think, helping them rebuild) I think we owe it to them, I think we owe it to ourselves to make sure that we don't forget about them, and make sure that this peace works and that, you know, that the country get on its feet again. And, so that's, I think that's the real challenge. It's tough, because, like I said, I mean, you know, the Congress, and the American people in general, there's a tendency to, you know, people get committed to an issue for 48 hours, you know, and then they get committed to another issue for 48 hours and, you know, all over the place. But, you know, it's really important we follow

22:45:57

through here. And, you know, I think if we do, I think that, I think El Salvador will be a much better country. I think the future looks bright. I think if we don't, and, you know, as soon as we turn our backs, you know, those, those old generals who are, you know, who are pissed off because their names are implicated in a murder or something like that or, you know, the guys who were nailed, you know, on some sort of corruption scandal, or somebody's who's trying to, you know, make a quick buck or, you know, trying to exploit somebody. You know, as soon as we turn our back, those guys are going to come back, and they're going to start, you know, gradually rebuilding their base and rebuilding their power, and, you know, we'll be back to square one. And I think we've got to make sure that the doesn't happen.

: Specifically, one of the, (?) right now is over the AID money . . .

McGOVERN: Yeah.

: . . . that's going down there. And, uh, one of the concerns that we heard was down there was that the AID money can become the equivalent, the non-military equivalent of the old military aid.

McGOVERN: Right.

: How, how do you address that problem?

McGOVERN: Well, again, we have to make sure that the AID money or any U.S. development money is doled out based on merit and not out of some sort of political patronage, or I'm trying to reward my buddy who stood with me in the war, you know, or the guy who's, you know, or to try to use development aid to punish the FMLN or something like that, and it's, that's a tough challenge. I mean, it's, I mean, I think they should fire everybody at AID and start anew, because one of the problems is that, you know, when you're involved with a situation, a lot of these guys have been there for a

long time. You know, and you, you know, you develop friendships and you develop biases and you develop an outlook on things that it's hard to change. You know, there's a, it's hard for some of those people who for ten years or more now, you know, have been so used to, you know, "Let's do this because it will punish these guys." You know, "How do we punish these people?" "How do we reward our friends," type of thing. When you're in that mindset, it's awfully tough to break out of it. And, you know, it's kind of the same mentality with, when you're talking to U.S. Military advisors about the behavior of the Salvadoran military. I mean, they have, you know, the new, you know, they worked with these guys every day. You know, they have, they'd have drinks at the end of the day, they'll go to their house for New Year's, I mean, there's, you know, they'd develop all these friendships, you know, and it's kind of like a parent-child

relationship. I mean, most parents are the last ones to want to admit that their kid, you know, is a brat. I mean, but, you know, and it takes a lot to get them to sometimes realize that it's the same thing here. I mean, they just don't want to believe, you know, that their buddy is capable of some of this stuff. You know, a lot of people always criticize the United States saying that, you know, they try to, the United States government by trying to say that, you know, there's some sort of a, you know, a, you know, a, uh, kind of a conscious effort, you know, to, you know, to, uh, to do some of the evil, you know, to help the army do some of the evil things they've done. I've never thought that. I mean, I've always felt that the problem is we were too close, some of these guys are too close. You know, when you talk about, for example right now, you go down and you talk about General Ponce to, you know, some of these guys in the military group. I

mean, you know, I mean, you'd have to be an idiot not to know that he was involved in the killing of the priests. I mean, there's just no way. I mean, you know, there's no way you could not believe that at this point. Yet you go down and talk to some of our top military guys down there today, and they'll be telling you, "Well, he is just fabulous. I mean, a wonderful man, a great patriot. If it wasn't for him, there'd be no peace." You know, and, you know, "Wonderful guy. We need more men like him." "Yeah, but what about the . . ." And he goes, "What about the, that he was involved with the priest killings?" "Well, you know, hey, that was, you know, we don't talk about that. That was a mistake, you know. But he's a great man." And, you know, when you think about it, you know, that, I mean, you know, you try to relate it to terms here in the United States, it's hard to, you know, I can't imagine anyone here, you know, telling anybody,

telling me, you know, that, "Oh, yeah, you know, Son of Sam, you know, he was involved with all these killings but he was, you know, a nice guy, you know. I mean, if it wasn't for him, you know, that park over there wouldn't have that new swing." You know, or something like that. <sup>(29.51.37 Maybe they're good friends but)</sup> It's just so ridiculous. I mean, it just, it's absurd, almost, and it's sad that, you know, we still feel we have to defend these creeps. And that's, that's rushed. Even now, I mean, you know, we're talking about cleansing the military and, you know, behind the scenes people are calling up and saying, "Hey, you know, Jim Mokley, would you object, you know, if, uh, they kept this guy and this guy and this guy on because, you know, even though they were involved in some bad things, you know, it's easier if we keep them." And Mokley's like, "I don't want any part of that. Everybody should go. I mean, all the killers need to go. If you start making exceptions then, you know, well,

what the hell are we doing this thing for?" But there's still that mentality. You know, how do we, how do we help our friends. And, uh, the problem is, like I said, I mean, you know, these friends of ours, you know, are not the nicest people in the world. I mean, maybe they're good as friends, but if you had them as an enemy, you end up dead.) I mean, the priests ended up dead, and, you know, the nuns, you talk about wipe out the nuns. When you think of the atrocities, and some of the stuff that these guys were involved in, I mean, the brutality, the violence, it's incredible. It should turn your stomach. And yet, everyone's, you know, they thought, they'd say, "Well, they're not that bad." You know? It's incredible.

: You mean, because there are (?).

McGOVERN: Yeah, I'll tell you, I mean, they, I mean, that's, I think that's, you know, that's the cliché that everybody always,

always invokes, and it's true. I mean, it's, you know, I just, you know, and I've also, I mean, the other thing is that I think one of the, one of the, one of the lessons I hoped with this new administration, the Clinton people, I'm hoping that his foreign policy team will bring to their approach to foreign policy that I think, that I hope will be different from what Bush and Reagan did is that any truth is the big, you know, it should be a very important priority. I mean, your, the truth is, the truth is relevant, and it's not, it's not, you know, we shouldn't be working overtime to hide the truth or cover up the truth, no matter how ugly it is. I mean, the truth eventually comes out, you know.

(22:54:02 we know denied)  
And we're finding right now with reports about this El Mizote(?) massacre, a massacre that our embassy and our government denied, remember Elliot Abrams on TV saying it never happened. And now all of a sudden they're digging up, you know, the bodies of hundreds of

kids and women and elderly people and,  
 you know, it happened. You know, I  
 mean, and we looked, the United States  
 of America, you know, we looked like  
 fools. Because we either, I mean, if  
 you want to be cynical, we knew about it  
 and covered it up, which is horrible, or  
 we didn't know about it, and then you  
 say but we should have. <sup>22:51:44</sup> You know? And,  
*long animated list of* you know, but, you know, the truth  
 should be important. The truth should  
 be important. I mean, You know, I think  
 on this Jesuit case, you know, the truth  
 about, you know, the extent of the  
 involvement, you know, the significance  
 of the higher-ups who were involved in  
 this whole thing, I mean, that should,  
 you know, that should be like shock  
 treatment to the, you know, to the  
 administration. They should, you know,  
 we did something wrong here. After  
 twelve years of, you know, wining and  
 dining these guys, sending them to Fort  
 Bragg for human rights training, giving  
 them whatever they want, getting them

the best equipment, sending down the U.S. military advisors, bringing them to the United States. You know, we, parading around D.C. in limousines, working with them on everything. And after all of that, billions of dollars invested in them, and after all of that that they go out one night and, you know, in a cold-blooded and calculated way, they go out and blow away six priests and two women. And they did it with, you know, without any remorse at all. And, you know, I mean, you know, I understand the lesson, you know. But, I mean, I hope the, you know, the guys who are over there still being apologists for these guys, for these army guys down there, I hope they understand the lesson.

: One thing that Dean Brackley . . .

( tape ends )

*missing* 22:57:58 (continue to monitor)  
 the issue is ES never was the Soviet Union or Cuba, never was. The issue in ES was on people that were denied basic rights, that were starving, that wanted homes for their kids, you know the people who originally joined the FREN, there were some Marxists I suppose, but a lot of the people, those campesinos who joined the FREN early on did so not out of a just for Marxist ideology I mean they did so bc, you know they wanted a home for their kids, I mean they were tired of having their sons speak up in criticism, and he was a bullet through his head. They

JTMAI EC-7

TAPE 43 - JIM McGOVERN INTERVIEW

: I wanted to ask you, before you said you didn't want the FMLN to win, and (?) there was a lot of people that didn't want the FMLN to win. Can you just tell me why?

McGOVERN: Yeah. Let me put it this way. I guess, hmm. I'm trying to think of an answer that doesn't sound like I'm a, you know.

: It's very important for our case that it has a real balance.

McGOVERN: Yeah, right.

: We don't want it to look like this is an FMLN-sided piece or anything. So please just fill me in.

McGOVERN: Yeah. No, I think, you know, when I said that, you know, we didn't want the FMLN to win, I mean, you know, what I meant, I think, was that <sup>22:21:24</sup> I don't think anybody <sup>we could have done it differently</sup> wanted to change El Salvador through violent revolution. And, you know, what tends to happen when there are, when governments are overthrown, on

top of all the violent upheavals, is that the most extreme elements on, you know, in the Revolutionary movement, tend to be the guys who take the helm, and they tend to be the least democratic. I think that was the fear of a lot of people up here. The legitimacy of, you know, of what kind of gave birth, you know, to, you know, to the war in El Salvador, I think, I think there were real legitimate concerns. I mean, hunger, malnutrition, housing, you know, human rights violations. All those things are very important. But I think that those things would not have been solved in a violent overthrow of the government. And, having said that, you know, we, our view all along was that, you know, that, you know, that doesn't mean you take the other side. What it means is you try to, uh, you try to behave like diplomats, you know, you try to involve the United Nations back then. You know, you try to bring in the international organizations that are

experienced in conflict resolution and negotiations, and you try to, you try to find out whether or not there's a way to avoid a war that down there cost 80,000 lives. And we didn't do that, and I think it was a mistake. You know, had we done that back then, we would have saved everybody a lot of misery, but we didn't. And I think there was a chance that things could have been resolved in a more peaceful manner. I'm personally, I'm basically a, you know, a non-violent person. I mean, I'm not a pacifist or anything like that, but, I mean, you know, with the conduct, the conduct by the military in this war was outrageous. There were also some very outrageous human rights violations committed by the FMLN that really were not, I mean, they really, that deserved to be condemned. I mean, they, you know, their, some of their actions were outrageous. I think the assassination of civilian mayors, for example, you know, was a real, you know, was a terrible, terrible

injustice. And the way they, and they had instances where, you may remember when the two U.S. servicemen were shot down in a helicopter. Two of the guys were still living when they crash landed. And under the Geneva conventions, you know, you're supposed to, uh, under the rules governing war, you know, you're supposed to not kill wounded people, and a group of FMLN combatants did, you know, murder those guys in cold blood. So, you know, there were, you know, I, you know, the FMLN has a lot to be accountable for, too. And that, I guess my point is that I think early on, you know, we could have played a more constructive role had we appealed to the U.N. and some of these other organizations that, you know, we're about to embark on a major war here, you know. We saw the writing on the wall for some time, and yet we didn't do anything except, you know, cow-tow to the military, to protect the status quo. And that was a big mistake

because, like I said, I mean, I think  
 the army down there is, we sided with  
 the most anti-democratic force in that  
 country. I mean, we sided with them  
 against the church, against unions, you  
 know, and that was wrong.)

: Um, thank you.

McGOVERN: Okay.

: Um, do you know Dean Brackley?

McGOVERN: I do. I mean, you know, I've known him  
 in the last couple of years through this  
 thing, you know.

: Could you just tell me a story or tell  
 me your feelings about Dean Brackley?  
 He's one of the main characters. I'd  
 like to hear what you have to say about  
 him.

McGOVERN: He, uh, I, uh, I'm very, very impressed  
 with Dean Brackley, as with all the  
 Jesuits that, you know, that came down  
 to El Salvador and filled the slots of  
 the priests who were murdered. And, uh,

you know, I remember one night when we were down in, after Mokley had given his speech, we had a little dinner with the, in the residence where the Jesuits used to, where the assassinated Jesuits used to live, and Dean Brackley was sitting next to Mokley, and Mokley says to him, "So, Father, what does a priest make down here in terms of salary?" And he says, "Well, you know, we really don't make, you know, hardly anything. You know, we give most of, the money we do get we, you know, we give to charity and we get something like . . ." It was something like, "You know, but I get like fourteen dollars a month in spending money." Mokley was like, "Fourteen dollars a month?" He says, "Yeah. That's about, you know, that's about all I, but that's enough down here." He says, "Christ, you couldn't buy a magazine subscription for fourteen dollars a month, never mind survive." And, but he struck me as a real, you know, a very compassionate individual, a

guy who cares about that country very much. I mean, that's the, I think that, you know, with a lot of the guys who came down, went down to El Salvador to kind of fill the void. And I think it happened with us, too. You know, you go down there and you can't help but get taken in by the country, and, you know, we occasionally get letters from Dean, you know, as do a lot of people up here, and you can see in the writing, you know, this, this real kind of excitement about, you know, what's going on and, you know, this real concern about, about the people and, you know, talk about individual, you know, cases, about somebody he's been working with, or somebody who had a problem he helped, or there was somebody who, you know, he just met who told him a good story. And, you know, you could, you could tell a lot about, you know, what's going through a person's mind by, you know, what they write and the tone of their letters and stuff, and he's a guy who

very much, I think, has fallen in love with El Salvador, and his really, and I think, and has done a great service, because, you know, when the Jesuits were assassinated the immediate concern was that, uh, you know, that was the end of the University, that these guys were really, I mean, the best and the brightest thinkers in that country. And that, uh, you know, they couldn't be replaced, and they could not be replaced. But, uh, but Dean and the handful of others who went down, you know, certainly, you know, uh, have kept that university running and have, uh, you know, and, uh, and I think that there are a lot of people down there and up here who owe him a great debt.

: ( off mike ) Do you want to do a release on video?

McGOVERN: I couldn't think of any, I couldn't think of any real funny stories on him. But, uh, and I may be wrong on the

fifteen dollars, but I remember it was something like that, you know.

: How about Charlie Burn? Got a big Charlie Burn story?

McGOVERN: Yeah, my, we work a lot, Charlie's up here a lot more. Charlie, one day, one day Christiani, this was early on, right after the, right after the Jesuits were killed, I think it was in, I think it was in March or April of 1990, and Charlie Burn came to talk to Mokley. It also happened on that same day, President Christiani was in town, and so was General Ponce. And Mokley told Christiani, you know, that he could use his Rules Committee office. Mokley was the chairman of the Rules Committee. You know, as a holding room, until their next appointment. So, uh, so Christiani and Ponce and all these other military guys, you know, with the fruit salad down there, you know, down their chest, and they're all, you know, having a pow-wow in Mokley's Rules office. Mokley's

personal office is right off his committee room. So Mokley's in there, and Charlie Burn comes in. So they're talking about all kinds of things and, you know, and Charlie Burn says, you know, he's in town to help raise money for the, for the University. And, uh, well, he goes, "Hold on, fella. I want to introduce you to somebody." So he opens the door, and he goes, "Mr. President, and General, this is Father Charlie Burn. He's going down to El Salvador to replace one of the priests that the military down there shot." He says, "I just want you to know, I want you to meet this guy." And, you know, they're all like, you know, looking at him like that. And Mokley says, "Don't worry, don't worry. He's in town to raise money for the university. That's all he's here for. You know, nothing for you guys to get concerned about." And then Mokley looks at Charlie Burn and looks at Ponce, and Christiani goes, he goes, "Father, I'll tell you what.

Don't, you better put your hat away, because you're not going to get any contributions from this crowd." And, uh, and with that we went back into the, back into Mokley's office. And, you know, Charlie Burn got a kick out of it. He thought it was, you know, Mokley thought, you know, he just, you know, it was the natural thing to do, you know. Charlie's going to El Salvador, these guys are in my office, we should just introduce them. But it was one of the lighter moments of this, of this whole thing. But Charlie, Charlie's a wonderful guy. I don't know if I told you this about, that he, we're doing a dinner for Mokley. I don't know if I told you this. We're doing a dinner for Mokley and we're going to raise, it's basically a tribute to Mokley's career in politics, and we're raising money, and with the money we raise we're going to endow a chair in his name at the Yucca. And so it's kind of, we talked about, he was a, someone, I think it was

Tip O'Neill's daughter approached him, you know, he was helping us out with his dinner, and she wanted to know, you know, "Where would you, where would you want a chair endowed in your name?" And he says, "Well," he says, "why don't we do it at the University of Central America?" And so, uh, so that's . . .

: Why do you think that Yucca is so close to Mokley's heart, and your heart?

McGOVERN: Well, I mean, this whole case, I think for both of us, you know, became almost an obsession. I mean, you know, you get into it, you know, and you're so outraged by some things, you know. You're excited when you're finding out the truth about, you know, about what really happened. You know, you want to try to do some good in this whole thing. And, you know, you just get pulled into it. And, um, you know, and really it's a very emotional experience. And you're dealing with an issue that is, you know, was so difficult, you know, to imagine

that they went in and killed these priests. I mean, it was just such a horrifying event. And going through, and in talking to the colleagues of the assassinated priests, I mean, you know, who just, you know, held them in such esteem, you know, and sitting through hours of conversations about, you know, what, you know, how important they were to the University, how important they were to the country, how, you know, what great human beings they were. You know, listening to, you know, people tell these heartfelt stories and, you know, you just, you get more and more pulled into it. And then you start to develop friendships with these people that you're talking with and, you know, it's just, uh, you know, and, again, you know, everybody's, you know, everybody on this, on this case was so dedicated, you know, to trying to find the truth, I mean, the Jesuits at the University and us and, you know, somebody's, some human rights organizations. I mean, we were

all, like, up late hours, you know, doing whatever it took to try to, to try to, you know, to try to get to the bottom of what was going on. You know, you become like a family. And, you know, the friendships and the relationships that, you know, that we developed, you know, during this, during that period, I mean, you know, will be forever. I will, you know, I've made some, you know, wonderful friends, and so has Mokley. People that, uh, you know, that are, you know, great people, you know, that we'll never forget. And so that, you know, I think that that's, you know, there's a special place in our heart for the university and for El Salvador. You know, you dedicate a couple of years of your life to this kind of stuff, and you really, you feel, you know, you really feel like you want to, you want to help. You want to do something good for their country. And, uh, (21:41:59) *bulky* I asked Mokley, you know, why, what was it that, you know,

that outraged him so much about the case. You know, what was it that drove him, you know, that made this case such an obsession with him. And he said that, that when he was a little bit, he says, in South Boston, his father is driving down the street, and he said he brought the car to a screeching halt. And he says, "Joe, what do you see over there?" And he pointed to two kids beating each, you know, in a fight. You know, one big kid picking on a little kid. And he said, "Two guys fighting, that's what I see." He says, "Yeah, but look." He says, "What's wrong?" He says, "Well, there's a big guy beating the hell out of a little guy." And he says, "Wow, right," he says, "what are you going to do about it." He goes, "What do you mean, what am I going to do about it?" He says, "Get your ass out of the car and go beat up the big guy for that little kid." So he said, "You know, I got out of the car and I got in a fight with the big guy." And he says,

"I beat the big guy up, and I got back in the car." And he says, "It's, uh," he says, "I've hated bullies ever since." He says, "I just, it's just something that I just, I can't stand bullies." And he says, "And, you know, and, you know, going down and seeing what happened down there, and talking with the members of the army, the high command and, you know, getting to know them." He says, "They're nothing but a bunch of bullies." I mean, he says, "You know, I want to go up and beat them up like I beat up that kid on the corner of South Boston." He says, "Because they, you know, I mean, the only thing they have going for them is they have guns and, you know, an army behind them, and they go around and step on anybody, and that's what they've been doing. And that's just wrong." ) And, uh, he says, "You know, so I really felt determined to want to, you know, to want to, you know, even the score a little bit." And, uh, he says, "So I wanted to make

sure that people knew, you know, that these guys were indeed bullies and they committed these atrocities." So.

: And so he chose you.

McGOVERN: Yeah. I just, he chose me because I was here, you know. I mean, I, I'm, again, I'm not a foreign policy expert. We, you know, I was working for him, among my tasks here I do, I do handle foreign affairs issues. And it was not just me, we had a great guy, Bill Woodward, who worked for Congressman Gary Studs, who now works with John Carey, who was a partner in this, and we also had some good people in El Salvador. We had a guy who, you know, Leno Gomez, a Salvadoran who helped us make some of the connections with people inside the military, and without him and without Bill and a few others, you know, we couldn't have, we couldn't have gotten anywhere.

: Thank you so much.