

NOTES ON STAFF MEETING

Now that the recess is over, I think it is important for us to discuss what we are going to do. I have a few suggestions which we might want to talk about -- but I would certainly appreciate your suggestions. So, please, if you have anything to say -- say it now.

I think most of you know that a staff delegation was sent to El Salvador, at my request, on January 8-10. I deliberately wanted to keep it small and I hope I didn't offend anyone in the process. I hope to accomodate more staff on the Members trip in February. The staff delegation is preparing a written summary of their trip -- which you should have on Tuesday.

I am aware that this Task Force provides the opportunity to focus attention on El Salvador in a way that we haven't been able to do for some time. I am also aware that the problems in that country go far beyond the murder of the six Jesuits. And I do not want this committee to simply say that Cristiani is doing a good job on this particular case -- as if to imply everything else is going well. In the same spirit, I do think it is important for us to give credit where credit is due. If Cristiani conducts a thorough investigation and prosecutes members of the military -- including men at the colonel level-- I think that is significant.

So, we have a complex task of trying to put all of this in a context that makes sense and is helpful in making things better in El Salvador and in laying the groundwork for more intelligent policy discussions in the United States.

* I think Cristiani's announcement of military involvement and his subsequent naming of specific individuals (including a colonel) is positive. But, I think everyone in this room shares my concern that we not be satisfied too easily.

I have stated publicly that a successful investigation means not only getting the men who actually committed the murders -- but it also must include bringing to justice those who ordered the killings or otherwise consented to the murders. Anything short of that is unsatisfactory, in my judgement. There are still alot of unanswered questions.

* Another issue that has developed concerns an incident involving a US major at the Embassy and his withholding key evidence regarding the murders. I'm sure most of you have already read about this in the press. The staff memo you will receive later will go into this in more detail...but I regard this as a very serious matter.

I would like to suggest that one of the things this Task Force do -- is focus on the embassy's actions in this investigation. Many questions still remain about the latest incident: Why did the US Major withhold the information? Did he know anything prior to killings? Why was the US Ambassador not involved in this matter?

* We need to know more about the Atlactl Battalion. What is its past human rights record? Since it is US trained, what is the extent of US involvement with the Battalion? How close do our guys work with them? What went wrong?

* I also think we need to zero in on this military corruption issue. Joel Mellman's piece in the NY Times I thought was excellent. Perhaps we can build on that.

* To the extent possible, as I already mentioned, we must try to place the Jesuit case in context. That means describing, in the best way we can, the attitudes of the military and members of the government towards the church. We need to document the radio broadcasts that occurred, while stations were under military control, in which the Jesuits were called communists and traiters. We need to go through the Salvadoran news papers for articles and statements that might be inflammatory....etc...

Trip Dates: dpt. Thurs afternoon --Feb ¹¹ return Sunday eve Feb. ¹⁴

TASK FORCE BRIEFINGS -- next Thursday Jan. 25 and Thursday Feb. 1

Subgroups: a) Atlactl Battalion b) Embassy actions c) Church persecution

/ military Corruption