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(Translation - Spanish)

San Salvador, January 3, 1990

General Rafael Humberto Larios
Minister of Defense and
Public Security
Alameda Dr. Manuel Enrique Araujo
City

Dear Minister:

I respectfully write to you to greet you very cordially and at the same time relay to you the following information that was provided to us by Major Eric W. Buckland, of the U.S. Navy, Advisor to the Joint C-V.

Major Buckland informed us that he received the following information from Colonel Carlos A. Aviles, Director of the Joint C-V. Col. López y López told him that a conversation had taken place between Colonel Benavides and Lieutenant Colonel Rivas, Chief of the Commission that is investigating the death of the priests at UCA. In that conversation, Colonel Benavides had told Lt. Colonel Rivas that Colonel Benavides was responsible for the death of the Jesuits, and that they had been killed by the Special Forces of the Atlacatl Rapid Deployment Infantry Battalion that was under the operational control of Colonel Benavides. Colonel Benavides asked Lt. Colonel Rivas what could be done. After this conversation Lt. Colonel Rivas reported the conversation to Colonel López y López, who in turn informed Colonel Aviles.

Colonel Aviles told Major Buckland that he did not believe that anyone else had that information, but that he believed that Colonel Ponce had been informed.

I learned of this information on January 2, 1990, which I communicated verbally to Colonel Ponce.

I relay this information to you hoping that it will help you in your investigation of such a serious crime.

With nothing more to add, I take this opportunity to convey to you our best wishes.

Milton Manjivar
Colonel, USA
Chief of the Military Group

S T A T E M E N T

I, MAJ Eric W. Buckland (042-52-1298), am writing this statement of my own will and will present all details, as I know them, to the best of my ability and as I remember them.

On or about 20 December 1989, I was in the office of the ESAP C-V, COL Carlos A. Aviles and we were talking about current events, ongoing projects for PSYOP - essentially the typical, almost daily conversation we had. During the course of our discussion, the case of the Jesuits arose and COL Aviles mentioned that he had some new information about the case. Before continuing, he repeated several times that I was to use this information for "Break in Case of Emergency." He then began to tell me the information:

COL Lopez y Lopez had told him that LTC Rivas had told him that COL Benavides (Commandant of EM) had admitted his responsibility in the slaying of the Jesuits. Again - when the investigation of the killings had started COL Benavides had approached LTC Rivas and said something to the effect of, "I did it. What can you do to help me?" According to COL Aviles, LTC Rivas was scared and did not know what to do. As a result, the investigation slowed and eventually, COL Lopez y Lopez went to talk to LTC Rivas. During the conversation LTC Rivas told COL Lopez y Lopez about COL Benavides' comments. COL Lopez y Lopez then passed on the information to COL Aviles and COL Aviles told me. Additionally, he told me that members of the BIRI Atlacatl GOE, lead by a lieutenant had done the actual killing. The GOE had been working out of the Escuela Militar during the offensive.

I asked COL Aviles who else knew and he said no one. I asked if COL Ponce knew and he said he believed that he did, but wasn't sure. He did not feel that it was his place to tell him. I wanted to know why they did not arrest COL Benavides right then and COL Aviles said that nothing could be done until the investigation was completed. We talked about the problem, in general terms and both agreed that the killings made no sense.

In subsequent discussions, I continued to ask about the investigation and COL Aviles told me that it was going well. One lieutenant from the Atlacatl had been questioned a few times and had done poorly with the polygraph - according to COL Aviles, the lieutenant had several excuses for why he had done poorly on the polygraph and appeared to be nervous. The Colonel also stated that the troops from the Atlacatl were being questioned and that their stories were starting to conflict. During our last discussion about the issue, COL Aviles told me that he had seen COL Benavides briefly at the Escuela Militar and that he looked like he had not eaten, was losing weight and seemed worried.

San Salvador, January 3, 1990

Eric W. Buckland

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