

Gral. Juan Rafael Bustillo

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San Salvador, El Salvador

Dec 10, 1989

Feb. 7, 1992

The Honorable Joseph Moakley
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Rep. Moakley,

Last October, I was most surprised to read a reference to me in your Washington Post editorial regarding the Nov. 16, 1989 murder of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter. In that article, you urged the Department of State to bar my entry into the United States "until a full investigation has been conducted into his possible involvement in initiating the murders of the Jesuit priests."

I was stunned by this indictment by innuendo. Never in any of your previous reports, statements, speeches or testimony had my name ever appeared as even being remotely connected to this case. Moreover, I believe that it is contrary to your legal system's tradition of due process to impose sanctions on a person prior to being charged, let alone convicted, of any crimes.

Furthermore, so far as I know, no one had ever alleged that I had anything to do with this heinous crime, and this includes reports by the FBI, Scotland Yard, and the Spanish police. More importantly, my name never was mentioned during the lengthy Salvadoran judicial proceedings regarding the Jesuit case.

However, as surprised as I was by the reference in the Washington Post, I was still unprepared for your report of Nov. 18, 1991, in which you cite anonymous sources who alleged that I initiated the plot to kill the priests. You also cite so-called "evidence" which purportedly support the thesis that I participated in a meeting with other senior officers at the Military School on the afternoon of Nov. 15, 1989 at which the murders were planned.

I categorically deny each and every allegation in your report and I find it reprehensible that you would have published these libelous charges without ever having contacted me about them.

First, your unnamed sources' charges are factually wrong. Consider, for example, the primary allegation that I presided over a session of senior officers at the Military School on the afternoon of Nov. 15, at which the murders were planned. That I attended no such meeting can be easily demonstrated.

The fact is that I could not have attended your source's conspiratorial meeting at the school that afternoon because, at the time, I was personally directing a major counter-attack against guerrillas entrenched near the air base.

As you may recall, the largest column of guerrillas in San Salvador during the 1989 FMLN offensive were dedicated to seizing the air base. Therefore, one of the most important tasks confronting me was to drive the communists out of Soyapango, a neighborhood proximate to the air base and within the jurisdiction of my military operations command. On the afternoon of Nov. 15, I was personally directing the offensive against the insurgents both by flying over the battlefield and by repeatedly visiting my troops at the front lines. My personal participation was required not only to direct the attack against the enemy but also to ensure that civilians -- who were being used as human shields by the communists -- were not caught in the crossfire.

Thus, it would have been impossible for me to be at the Military School for the alleged conspiratorial meeting. Both the records at the air base and the testimony of the hundreds of airmen and infantry who participated in the attack that afternoon will confirm my presence at the scene of the battle, which is over 20 kilometers from the school.

In fact, the only time I left my command on Nov. 15 was that evening, when I was called to a general staff meeting at the Estado Mayor. Because there was fighting all over the city, I could not travel safely by car to attend the meeting. Therefore, I took a helicopter to military headquarters.

Both the log book of the helicopter I used, my co-pilot's testimony, and the helicopter squadron records will indicate that I did not leave the air base for the general staff meeting until the evening hours on Nov. 15. After the meeting, I immediately returned to my command.

As further evidence of the total lack of credibility of your anonymous sources, let me address one of the allegations which purportedly supports the theory that I initiated the murders. Your report attributes certain statements to Gen. Ponce and I at a meeting we allegedly had with other officers on Dec. 10, 1990.

I attended no such meeting. Since my resignation as commander of the Salvadoran Air Force on Dec. 31, 1989, I have never had a

meeting with Gen. Ponce on any topic. Moreover, on Dec. 10, 1990 I was not even in El Salvador. The visa stamps in my passport clearly demonstrate that I could not have had a meeting with Gen. Ponce and other officers on the day in question.

A word must be said about the manner by which you chose to unveil these rumors. It is contrary to every notion of fairness to print such malicious charges against me without ever having investigated their veracity. The most important action in such an investigation would have been to meet with the subject of the charges and to ask him for a response and solicit any evidence which might tend to prove or disprove the allegations. Mr. Moakley, neither you or your staff ever met with me to review the allegations and the so-called evidence contained in your report. You never bothered to meet with the person most damaged by these serious charges.

It is also noteworthy that neither Judge Zamora, the magistrate overseeing the Jesuit case, nor his staff or government investigators ever asked me about any of the allegations published in your report. This implies either that you never informed him of the allegations -- a curious circumstance given your dedication to justice in the case -- or that he found them to be so without merit that he did not follow up your "leads."

Of course, the erroneous "evidence" cited in your report raises questions about the truthfulness of your unnamed sources. However, since your sources will not come out of the shadows to make their accusations in public, the veracity of your sources cannot be subjected to rigorous cross-examination. In this sense, the U.S. legal system is superior to the congressional practice of issuing reports: in criminal cases, ultimately those repeating the accusations must make their sources known. Unfortunately, my accusers cannot be forced into the open in a similar manner.

Given my refutations of the specific charges contained in your report as well as the irresponsible way in which your editorial and report were written and released, I challenge you to come to El Salvador and join me in publicly investigating your report's charges. You can make your case, and I will present mine. We can pursue any issue or evidence, and the only requirement that I must insist on is that we conduct our inquiry in full public view. It is important that we not operate behind the cloak of secrecy with which you have thus far masked your activities. By operating in the open, every interested citizen can make up his own mind as to where the truth of the matter lies.

In your pursuit of this case, you have listened to some who have motives other than helping you find the truth. By not asking me about these criminal allegations before publishing your report,

you have inflicted a grave injustice on me. I ask you to join me in El Salvador at your earliest possible convenience for a public debate regarding your charges. After having lent your name to these scurrilous allegations, the least you can do now is afford me the opportunity to clear my name.

Awaiting your reply, I remain

Sincerely yours,

General Juan Rafael Bustillo

Dear General Bustillo -

Thank you for your ~~letter~~ ^{letter} of Feb 7, 1992
~~and I stated in my November 1990 report,~~
I am ^{not} ~~the~~ ~~statement~~ I released in Nov. 1990 ^{included} ~~in~~
statements by

~~Walter~~

Why would he use some that Dan, Parilla
as not involved in the land
case. I'm very cognate of interest
with the Truth Commission and

to my part - I am interested only in the
truth.