January 2 1990
Washington, D.C.

I. Eric Warren Buckland, Major, United States Army, due hereby provide the following free and voluntary statement to ALLH.Colly Coll Loilliam K. Time, Eve Special Agents Martin v. Hale and havid W. Schrimp, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

I am permanently assigned to the U.S. Military Group, El Salvador, where I work in the area of Civil-Military Operations. In that capacity, I am assigned as a National Staff Advisor to the Ml Salvadoran Armed Forces. I have served in that capacity since October of 1989. I served a temporary assignment in 1: Salvador during June and July of 1989.

I was assigned advisor responsibilities to Colonel
Carlos Armando Aviles, who is the head of the C-5 (Civil-Military
Operations) for the El Salvadoran Armed Forces. I developed an
extremely close professional and personal rapport with Colonel
Aviles and held him in the highest regards.

On Nevember 11, 1989, the Salvadoran guerrilla movement began an offencive in the city of San Salvador. On or about November 16, 1989, six Jesuit priests were killed on the University of central America campus. Thoth Colonel Aviles and myself spoke of these killings with a mutual feeling that they were senseless and brutal. Both of us were well aware of the

The a

serious political implications these killings would have on El Salvador if the military and/or government were involved. We also had discustions regarding the status of the investigation into these killings.

On or about December 20, 1989, I was visiting with Colonel Aviles in his office when the topic of the killings once again was brought up. This discussion, I believe, took place on December 20, 1949; however, it may have occurred up to a week prior to that dake. During that discussion, Colonel Aviles told me he was about to relay information to me not as an El Sálvadoran melitary officer to an American military officer but from "Carlo" to Eric." He said this information, to use an American expression, is "Break in Case of Emergency." In the ensuing discussion, he indicated to me that the information he was about to provide had serious consequences and, in response to my questions, told me that it should only be divulged in extreme circumstances. In the event the Jesuit investigation did not unfold properly or if he (Aviles) should be killed, then it was his desire that this information be made available to the appropriate authorities.

Colonel Aviles told me that Colonel Guillermo Benavides Moreno had visited Lieutenant Colonel Rivas, who is the current commander of the Special Investigative Unit (SIU) charged with the responsibility of investigating the Jesuit murders. Colonel

.;.

date, a Colonel Lopez y Lopez, who I believe was a former commander of SIU, visited with Colonel Rivas. Colonel Rivas told Colonel Lopez y Lopez of his conversation with Colonel Benavides. Colonel Lopez y Lopez then told Colonel Aviles of this sequence of events, possibly because I later learned that Colonel Aviles as one of the first commanders of SIU and possibly because of their very close professional association of many years, having graduated in the same class from the Escuela Militar.

Colone: Aviles told me he believed Colonel Lopez y
Lopez went to Colonel Rivas to inquire about the status of the
investigation be muse there was a perception that the
investigative process had stagnated. According to Colonel
Aviles, Colonel-Rivas took that opportunity to "unload on Lopez y
Lopez," or at least that was Colonel Aviles' perception. Colonel
Aviles said that it was clear that Colonel Rivas was very
concerned and mer have been unsure of how he should treat the
incriminating information obtained from Colonel Benavides due to
cultural, political, and military considerations in El Salvador.

I questioned colonel Aviles as to the veracity of the information. I did not understand how Colonel Benavides could have done this himself—how he could have shot the priests by himself. Colonel Aviles told me that the killings had been carried out under the direction of Colonel Benavides; however the act(s) them elves had been done by members of the "Grupo de Operaciones Especiales" (GOE). That GOE platoon belongs to the COLONEL Atlacatly the is an indian name assigned to an immediate infantry reaction battalion, known by the Spanish acronym BIRI, comprised of 1,700 to 1,400 soldiers. The killings were actually supervised by a lieutenant from that unit, whose name I was not provided. I was not provided the identity of any other soldiers who allegedly participated in this attack.

discussed further. I maked Colonel Aviles who else knew. I asked him if the El Calvadoran Armed Forces Chiof of Staff, Colonel Emilio Ponce, knew, and he fold me he did not know, He did not feel it was his place to boll Colonel Ponce, but assumed that Colonel Ricas or Colonel Lopez y Lopez would have informed Colonel Ponce. We both agreed over and over again that the killings were slupid, senseless, and the ramifications disastrous. I maked Colonel Aviles, "Why don't they arrest Benavides right now?" He told me that under El Salvadoran law the investigation must be fully completed before arrests are

٠,

made. I felt confident with his answers because of the trust I had in him and colt justice would be served.

As the days progressed, we discussed the killings and the investigation. He fold me that several enlisted soldiers had been questioned and that their stories were "flaky." He subsequently told me that a lieutenant from the Atlacatl had been questioned and olven at least two polygraph examinations. Although the lieutenant "blew it" during the examinations, he successfully attributed his lack of success to heavy smoking, recent battle experience, and illness.

On or about December 28, 1989, I had lunch with Colonel Aviles at which time the Jesuit killings were again discussed. While driving to lunch, Colonel Aviles, out of the blue, remarked to the effect, "no you remember that case we were talking about? Well, I saw him over at the Escuela Militar. He looked as though he's losing weight, like he's not eating, and looks like something's on his mind or bothering him." I said, "preoccupado" (the Spanish word for concerned or worried), and he told me, "Yes, that's the word." I took this conversation to indicate that Colonel Ber wides was the party who Colonel Aviles was referring to and that Benavides knew the SIU was aware of his involvement and was closing in on him.

On another occasion in his office, I asked Colonel Aviles who else knew this information or was involved. He told

me he did not know who had been hold or who was involved. It became clear that Cetoned Avilco did not know if the Chief of Staff, Colonel Jence, knew of this information. When I asked him, "Does Colonel Pence know yet?" He told me, "I don't know. I don't know who knows. What if a higher-up ordered this thing?"

through January 2, 1990. I spent New Year's Eve at his house. However, by January 2, 1990, it was apparent to me that the investigation was not progressing and that despite my feeling that I would be betraying my trust and friendship with Colonel Aviles, I had a responsibility to inform my superiors of this information. On Tuesday, January 2, 1990, I verbally informed Lieutenant Colonel William Hunter, the U.S. Army Senior Advisor to the National Staff of the El Salvadoran Armed Forces, who was my immediate superior. According to him, he thereafter informed Colonel Milton Henjivar, Commander, U.S. Military Group, El Salvador. I was told Colonel Menjivar then spoke with the El Salvadoran Chief of Staff, Colonel Ponce, regarding this information. Colonel Ponce denied knowledge of this information.

At 7:00 p.m. that night, I was called at home and ordered to report to Colonel Poncets office where a meeting was held. Attending the meeting were myself, Colonel Aviles, Colonel Ponce, Gentlement Colonel Hunter, and Janica Elmore (phonetic), a political officer in the U.S. Embassy,

San Salvador. Puring this meeting, the El Salvadoran military officers were again maked if they had knowledge of this information, which they denied. Colonel Aviles was specifically asked several times if he had discussed the Jesuit killings with me and if he had furnished me with the information related in this statement. Colonel Aviles said that he had in fact discussed the killings in general conversation, but he categorically denied furnishing any information the Armed Forces of El Salvador and Colonel Benavides were involved in these homicides.

I have had no further contact or discussions with Colonel Aviles since this meeting.

question why I formished this information to the U.S. Government so many days after I received it. I can only say that I felt a strong sense of loyalty, not only to my mission in El Salvador, but to my friend and associate Colonel Carlos Aviles. I felt that the investigation would take its own proper course and that I and the U.S. military would be able to successfully maintain our relationship with Colonel Aviles and the El Salvadoran Armed Forces. I did not pass this information for any devicus reasons "to get" Colonel Aviles. I did not feel hergic in doing it. I, in fact, now question whether or not Colonel Aviles is due my

of El Salvador now, and I only hope, rather than sincerely believe, that I have done the right thing. Lee abbundant

I have reviewed this statement consisting of this page and seven other pages and find them to be accurate and true to the best of my knowledge.

Major Eric Warren Buckland

SWORN AND SUBSCRIBED TO

BEFORE ME AT WASHINGTON, D.C.

ON THIS 11 DAY OF TAN 1990

PAUL H. Cully 7:41PM

Ollian X Com, 1-11-90 7:41

A. I legan

# Buckland Statement Jan. 12, 1990 EWB

2

#### Addendum

On a day approximately 10 days proir to the killings (c... Nov. 6, 1989) I rode with Col. Aviles to the Military School on the Southwest side of San Salvador, approx. 800 yards from the UCA (University of Central America). Col. Aviles stated the Chief of Staff Ponce, of the El Salvadoran Armed forces, sent him there to solve a problem with Col. Benavidez. Aviles met with Col. Benavidez for approxiamtely 15 min. Aviles appeared very uncomfortable about talking to Benavidez. Upon returning to the vehicle Aviles called me back to the vehicle (I was stankding approx. 75 yards away watching the t....) and told me the he had to work something out, Col. Benavidez is from the old school, he liked to handle thins in his own way in the old style. Benavidez stated to Aviles that he wanted to do something about the priests .... things coming out of the UCA. Benavidez told Aviles that Ella Coria was a problem. Aviles told me they wanted to handle it the old way by killing some of the priests. I asked what happened when you (Aviles) talked to him. Aviles said that he talked him out of it. Aviles told me that Benavidez was old school and was still the "rammer".

And Aviles added that there was some talk about

XXXXX the death squads which were run out of the military at some time.

### addendum

EWB

also

I wow remember and I'm now

killings and was told that they were planned by Benavidez however at the tim it was told to me by Aviles I felt unconcerned that it would happen because other people were talking along those lines and I didn't feel that the El Salvadoran Armed forces would do something about it. Also because Chief of Staff Ponce assigned a senior Col. (Aviles) to address the problem I felt that if there was any validity to this talk it would not happen.

EWB

I didn't think they would do something that foolish.

- -- ON JANUARY 14, BUCKLAND CALLED THE FBI AND SAID THAT HE WAS "UNCOMFORTABLE" WITH HIS STATEMENT OF JANUARY 11. HE SAID THAT HIS MEMORY HAD BEEN TRIGGERED AFTER SEEING A PHOTO OF COL. BENEVIDES, AND HE DECIDED THAT HE HAD NEVER SEEN THAT INDIVIDUAL ON THE STEPS OF THE ESCUELA MILITAR.
- -- ON THE QUESTION OF ADVANCE KNOWLEDGE, BUCKLAND INDICATED THAT HE FELT UNDER PRESSURE FROM HIS FBI QUESTIONERS THAT HE MUST HAVE KNOWN SOMETHING ABOUT THE PLAN.
- -- BUCKLAND DENIED THAT HE HAD LIED TO THE FBI, AND NOTE THAT HE FELT PRESSURED BY THE INTERVIEWER. AT THE TIME HE HAD MADE THOSE STATEMENTS, BUCKLAND SAID, HE WAS IN A POOR MENTAL STATE.
- -- BUCKLAND WAS AWARE OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THESE STATEMENTS AND THE INFORMATION HE HAD EARLIER PROVIDED, AND SIAD THAT HE WAS EAGER TO L'ESOLVE THIS CONFLICT.
- -- FOLLOWING THIS TELEPHONE CONVERSATION, THE FBI RE-INTERVIEWED BUCKLAND, RESULTING IN THE JANUARY 18 STATEMENT.

END SUMMARY

#### POLYGRAPH REPORT

1/24/90	PATS OF EXAMINATION RUBES 1117 OF A 1712/90 164	61206 PROMINER PERSONNER	
FIELD OFFICE	OR AGENCY REQUESTRES EXAMINATION		· •
FB1 HQ	OFFICIAL.	The second secon	
ADIC, Cri	minal Division	DATE AUTHORIZED	
BUCKLAND.	ME (LAST, FRIST, MIDDLE) ERIC WARREN		<del></del>
•	UNSUBS;	. P. v. Miller and residence special problems arrange property in the contract of the contract	·- • <del></del> • • • •
Cash title	SHOOTING OF SIX JECUIT PRIESTS	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
	IN SAN SALVADOR, DE SALVADOR; FPS - MURDER		
31		· · •	

BEFERRNCHA

QO: FOING

Polygraph Exam - January S, 1990, El Salvador

CASE SYNOPSIS/EXAMINER CONCLUSI III

Captioned subject, ERIC WARREN BUCKLAND, is a U.S. Army Major (Special Forces/Psychological Operations) who was permanently assigned in El Salvador in a military advisor to the El Salvadoran Army from October, 1989, through January, 1990.

During subject's period of assignment, specifically on Movember 16, 1989, six dendit priests were murdered at the University of Central America (UCA). Major BUCKLAND advised that in approximately aid-December, 1989, Colemal Carlos Armando Avites, who is the head of C-5 (Civil-Military Operations), stated that he know who was responsible for the killings of the desuits. Major BUCKLAND stated that he withheld this information and did not advise U.S. military officials until January 2, 1990 when he verbally informed Lt. Colonel William Minter, his immediate supervisor. Prior to this; hewever, Major BUCKLAND did send a letter to his sister, who is a reporter for CUN news, on December 25, 1989 and advised her of his knowledge surrounding the Jesuit murders.

Major MCKLAND denied any further knowledge of the killings during debriefings in January, 1990. He was afforded a polygraph examination at FBING on January 11, 1990 to verify his statments. During this examination the following relevant questions were asked:

# "SERLES I

A. Did you send a letter to your minter telling her about the Rillings? Answer: Yes.

CNAMER HANDS SEA PAUL OF COLLY

f 164 49 m e s

### Continuation of FD-498:

- 8. Have you deliberately provided us with false information regarding the Jennik killings? Answer: No.
- C. Did Colonel Avilar provide on with information about the Jesust killings? Answer: Yes.

It is the opinion of the examiner that questions A and C did not indicate deception and question B did indicate deception. A second series was administered as follows:

### SERIES II

- D. Did you make up the story about sending a letter to your sister? Answer: No.
- R. Are you making up the fact that Colonel Aviles told you about the Jesuit killings? Answer: No.
- F. Did you make up the information you provided about the Josuit killings? Answer: No.

It is the opinion of the examiner that questions D and E did not indicate deception and that question F did indicate deception. A third series was administered as follows:

# SERIES 111

G. Did you deliberately provide us with false information regarding the Jesuit killings? Answer: No. 3

It is the opinion of the examiner that there were indications of deception to question G. Buring a Fourth series, the following relevant questions were asked:

## SERIES IV

- U. Did you have prior knowledge that the Jesuit would be killed? Answer: No.
- 1. Did you participate in the killing of the Jesuits?

At is the examiner's opinion that there were indications of deception to question II and that results of question I were inconclusive.

BUCKLAND admitted that he obtained prior knowledge that the priests in the UCA were going to be killed, specifically ELLA TORIA, through conversations with Colonel Avilos. According to Najor BUCKLAND, Colonel Aviles told him of the intent of certain officers of the El Salvadorah Army to conduct a military operation squinst the University

Continuation of FD-490:

· .

Ŷ

of Central America. Major BUCKLAND became aware of this information several weeks before the Jenuits were mardered. He was also advised on the afternoon of November 16 that the operation would take place.

Major BUCKLAND desired being involved in these murders in any way. He stated that the reason it took him so long to come forward was because of his affection and loyally to the people of El Salvador. He stated that he did not advise U.S. military officials of his knowledge prior to the murders because he felt the U.S. would mishandle the situation.

An additional polygraph examination was conducted on 1/12/90 during which the following relevant question were asked:

- A. Is what we cold me about your talks with Colonel Aviles the truth? Answer: Yes.
- B. Did you discuss the operation at the UCA with Colonel Aviles prior to November 16, 19897 Answer: Yes.
- c. To the best of your knowledge did you tell the truth about the Jesuits? Answer: Yes.

1t is the opinion of the examiner that the results of this examination were incomplusive.

Major BUCKLAID provided specific information regarding his knowledge of the Jesui killings during a lengthy interview on 1/12/90 which was recorded on video tape. This video tape has been entered into evidence at FBING (#00)16093 PQL X0) and will be maintained at the Polygraph Unit, FBING, GRB, Suite 2.

"I, Eric Warren Buckland, Major, United States Army, hereby provide the following free and voluntary statement to Special Agents Martin V. Hale and Thomas B. McNally whom I know to be Special Agents of the FBI.

upon this occasion egarding any and all information known to me regarding the killings of the six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter on November 16, 1989, at San Salvador, El Salvador, specifically any and all information known to me prior to November 16, 1989.

"I previously provided a signed, sworn statement to FBI Agents at FBI Headquarters, Washington, D. C. on January 10-11, 1990. I am currently on a temporary duty assignment basis at Fort Brayg, North Carolina.

Washington, D. C., during January 10-12, 1990, I wish to state and explain the following:

regarding any proposed threat to or attack on the University of Central America, including any of the Jesuit priests prior to the Incident on November 16, 1989.

"I wish to specifically retract information or comments or statements made to FBI Agents list week to that effect.

"Regarding my several comments about the Killings of the Jesuits on November 16, 1989, my statement made to the FBI on January 10, 1990, was

positive memory or I have firm beliefs that they are all correct. All statements regarding events beginning on or about December 20, 1989, when Colonel Aviles told me the knowledge he had about the Jesuit killings be correct.

Prior knowledge of the killings are not correct. During the course of the interview with Mr. Faul Colly on January 11-12, 1990, I felt compelled only to give the truth. I was convinced beginning on January 11, 1990, and completely on January 12, 1990, that I had had prior knowledge of some sort of activity directed against the Jesuits. I was also convinced by Mr. Cully that this knowledge had been suppressed by me. As the interview continued, I began to doubt myself and the things that I knew to be true. I broke down and cried and sobbed on several occasions, and for most of the interview felt completely helpless and confuse 1. The statements I made all seemed real to me at the time and I was convinced I had not thought of them earlier because I had suppressed them. Upon reflection of those statements, I know that they are not true.

"Regarding the account of my first visit to the military school with Colonel Carlos A. Avites, on at least one occasion we did visit the military school and Colonel Avites told me he had been sent by Colonel Ponce to smooth a problem (not further identified) with Colonel Benavides, the Commandant of the military school. Upon arrival at the school, Colonel Avites asked me if I would mind walting outside for him. I thought nothing special of that and said 'Yes Sir'. Colonel Avites entered a building on the military school grounds and I spent the next fifteen minutes or so looking at the military school pool and trac). Either when Colonel Avites entered the building or

FIN

left it, I did notice a total of four or five officers, to include Colonel Aviles, on the steps of the building he was entering. Colonel Aviles also seemed to be uncomfortable before he entered the building.

Aviles that I saw included Colonel Benavides and Lieutenant Colonel Leon. I do not believe that identification of Colonel Benavides to be correct at this time. I believe that because this past weekend (January 13-14, 1990), I saw a photograph of someone identified as Colonel Benavides on television and it was not the same officer I remember on the steps. I also do not specifically remember that Lieutenant Colonel Leon was present.

building at the military school, he left the building and began walking back to the vehicle. He motioned to me to come back down to the vehicle from where I was standing. After we both got into the vehicle, I asked him words to the effect of what was soing on and I do not remember his reply or specifically what we talked about. I do not recall any specific discussion about Colonel Benavides planning to do anything or any discussion by anyone, including Colonel Aviles on any proposed or possible attack or threat to the University of Central America or any persons associated with that university.

"During that same visit or possibly another one, Colonel Aviles and I got out of his vehicle after it was parked in front of the main military school building. If all of these events occurred in one visit to the school, Colonel Aviles would have driven from the first parking area to a second location on the school grounds. We entered the main lobby of the building and Colonel Aviles a ked me to wait for him there while he went off to see someone. I don't remember who he went to see, or if he told me who he was

...

EVA

٠,

going to see. While alone, I met Colonel Aviles' cousin, a language teacher at the military school and we spoke about people we might know in common and he told me about the line quality of the bread baked at the school. When Colonel Aviles returned to the main lobby, he gave me a tour of the main building and he spoke nostalgically of his days as a cadet in that building. I do recall specifically an old wooden desk he showed me that had his "signature as well as Colonel Ponce's signature in the middle drawer. At that time, I began to wonder how I might be able to get the desk from the military school and have it refinished and give it to Colonel Aviles as a present.

"During that tour, I also visited the small range that is within the military school complex. I do not recall during that tour any specific discussions about the University of Central America, the Jesuits or Father Ellacuria. The first visit to the military school probably occurred in late October and the tour of the military school, if not conducted during the same visit, occurred within a few days after the first visit.

"During the first two weeks of November, I do not remember the specific dates, Colonel Aviles had gone on vacation with his family to New Orleans. I believe be returned on the night of November 14, 1989, or November 15, 1989, and I saw him the first time upon his return the morning of November 15, 1989, or November 16, 1989. Contrary to my statement on January 12, 1990. I do not remember him ever specifically telling me about a military operation conducted at the University of Central America. However, during November 16, 1989, as the day progressed, or beginning early on November 17, 1989, remore and then actual information began to circulate about the killings at the University of Central America.

"Between November 15 and November 20, 1989, my roommate, Captain

12/R

Carlos Puentes, an American, and I spent two or three nights at our work site, the Mangito. The Mingito is the Estado Mayor Annex and contains a print plant, a radio station, a libe library, a recording studio, various offices and a separate counterintelligence building. I do not specifically recall which nights between those dates we spent in the Mangito. However, I believe on the night of November 16, 1989, after Captain Puentes and myself had laid down to go to sleep or were in fact sleeping. Colonel Aviles awoke us as he was making his rounds to visit his personnel. He was accompanied by at least two of his soldiers. That is the only time I remember Colonel Aviles visiting us late at night in the Mangito. Also, when he did visit us, there was a fairly intense fire ight fairly close to the Mangito, which I now realize was occurring in the vicinity of the University of Central America. I only realized on January 12, 1990, where that firefight was. I do not specifically remember Colonel Aviles making any reference to a specific attack on the University of Central America. It is possible he mentioned the firefight was occurring in the vicinity of the University. I would also like to add that sometime between the killings of the Jesuits and when Colonel Aviles informed me about what he know about the killings on or about December 20, 1989, he did mention that he had visited the scene of the crime and the Special Investigation Unit, and he felt there was a fifty-fifty possibility the military had conducted the atrocity.

Within the first week of December 1989, I visited Washington, D. C. with Colonel Aviles and Mr. Valdibiaso while transporting a captured weapon which was to be exhibited at the UN and OAS. During the confee of that three or four day visit, I do not recall any specific discussion about prior knowledge of the Jesuit killings or about who was responsible other than the

FMLN. I believe this visit occurred between November 29, 1989 and December 2, 1989. While in Washington, we stayed in the Highland Hotel on Connecticut Avenue.

On December 28, 1989, I informed my rocumate, Captain Puentes, what Colonel Aviles had rold me about the Jesuit killings on or about December 20, 1989. Also on the day I was informed by Colonel Aviles about the killings or a day or two later, I telephonically informed my sister, Carol E. Buckland, Atlanta, Georgia, about the information Colonel Aviles had told me. I told her I would send more specific information via a letter. I gave her this information for two reasons: one, if I was killed because of it, I wanted the truth known; and two, I just had to tell somebody and I trusted my sister that she would not say anything.

"On December 25, 1989, I did in fact write a letter to my sister with the specifics and mailed that letter on December 27, 1989.

"In summary, I had no specific prior knowledge about the murders of the Jesuit priests or any specific plans or threats against them.

"I have reviewed this statement consisting of this page and five other pages and find them to be accurate and true to the best of my knowledge.

Exic Nama Suckland MAT SF

Sworn and subscribed to

before me at Fort Bigg, North Carolina,

on this 19 th day of free as

. 1990.

Maria Hill Mally SIT-FBI- + and Congressman John Joseph Moakley Papers