

conversation between Benevides and Lt. Col. Rivas in which Benevides apparently took responsibility for the crime (see discussion below).

6. Embassy and Salvadoran officials could be asked to describe the potential obstacles within the Salvadoran judicial system to a conviction of those presently charged with the murders.

THE MENJIVAR-AVILES AFFAIR

(note: this information is based on staff, and some Member-level discussions with U.S. Embassy personnel)

On January 2nd, U.S. Mil. Group leader Col. Milton Menjivar was told that an American Major in his unit had been told some ten days previously of a conversation between the Col. Benevides and SIU head Lt. Col. Rivas in which Benevides admitted at least some responsibility for killing the Jesuits. This information was passed to the Major by Col. Aviles, a friend, who said he had obtained it from Lt. Col. Lopez y Lopez, a former head of the SIU, who was then providing assistance to Rivas.

Acting without the permission either of the Ambassador or DCM Jeffrey Dietrich, Menjivar and political officer Janice Elmore immediately confronted Col. Ponce and unspecified other members of the high command with the information. Ponce responded by telling Menjivar to put the accusation in writing.

Menjivar returned to the Embassy and prepared the statement and returned to the High Command. Col. Aviles and Lopez y Lopez are brought in, both deny they said anything to the American Major. Both Aviles and the Major are polygraphed, both fail.

Five days later, SIU has produced evidence from ballistics tests that prove Atlacatl involvement in the murders. Cristiani makes the announcement of military involvement and arrests follow soon thereafter.