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November 23, 1991

Letter to the Editor
Boston Herald
P.O. Box 2096
Boston, MA 02106

To the Editor:

I was disappointed with the Herald's editorial "Moakley's Double Standard" (November 23, 1991).

I have condemned human rights abuses by both the Salvadoran Armed Forces and the FMLN. Both sides, in my view, have demonstrated a contempt for the basic human rights of Salvadoran civilians -- a contempt that has caused the deaths of over 70,000 Salvadorans since 1980. I hope and pray that both sides will have the common sense to agree on a permanent settlement to the war soon so that this death and destruction can finally end.

I make absolutely no apologies for my effort to see that the murderers of six Jesuit priests and two defenseless women are brought to justice. The Speaker of the House appointed me to head a special task force to monitor the Salvadoran Government's investigation into that crime and that is exactly what I have tried to do. Quite frankly, I am outraged -- and so should you be -- at the fact that these murders were committed by members of the Salvadoran army -- an army that has received over \$1 billion in U.S. taxpayers dollars. I don't know about you, but I, for one, have always believed that money could have been better spent creating jobs right here in Massachusetts.

As for the trial that was held in which two officers were convicted of murder, you failed to mention that seven were acquitted. Among those acquitted were the men who confessed to actually murdering the priests. In addition, the investigation never even looked into the issue of who ultimately was responsible for giving the orders. Is that justice? Is that something we should applaud?

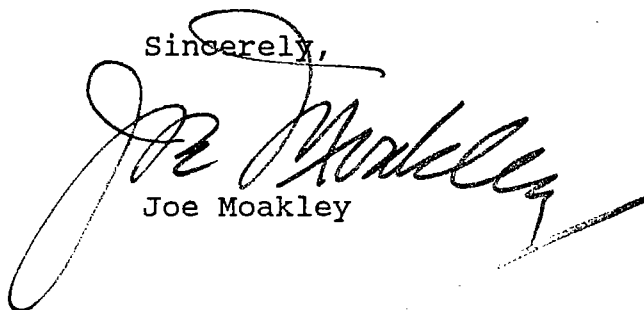
The investigation is over and the truth is not known. The report that I released on November 18 details information that I was told by respected and credible members of the Salvadoran Armed Forces that senior officers -- who were not questioned in any detail by Salvadoran judicial authorities -- were responsible for masterminding the crime. This is information that has not been disputed by the Administration nor anyone else with a shred of

credibility. Should I have kept this all to myself, perhaps for my future memoirs? I think not. Sometimes getting to the truth is ugly, but I prefer it to silence and lies.

One more thing, no one in the U.S. Congress has pushed harder for justice in the case of the two US servicemen who were murdered by the FMLN . If you had looked at my record more carefully you would have seen my actions and speeches in the House of Representatives and in El Salvador on this matter. You would also have found that only three weeks ago, 80 of my colleagues joined in sending a letter I wrote to the FMLN leadership demanding that they turn over the murderers of the U.S. servicemen to either Salvadoran or U.S. authorities so they can stand trial.

People can disagree with me on my analysis of the situation in El Salvador -- but, I must object when anyone questions my fairness.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Moakley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Joe Moakley

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Moakley's double standard

A new red herring has been thrown into the debate on aid to El Salvador. Congressional critics are willing to stop at nothing to deprive the Central American democracy of essential support, and force a settlement advantageous to Marxist rebels.

U.S. Rep. Joseph Moakley (D-Mass.) has released a memo charging that the Salvadoran defense minister and his deputy were involved in planning the murders of six Jesuit priests in November of 1989.

The six-page memo claims that circumstantial evidence links the officials to the brutal crime, based on the testimony of certain informants. Why doesn't the congressman take this information to Salvadoran prosecutors? The informants, we are told, are afraid to make their charges publicly.

Both officials have strenuously denied the allegations. But that's about all they can do. If the charges aren't made openly, there's no way to test the witnesses' credibility. How very convenient.

At stake is \$42 million in military aid, embargoed by Congress shortly after the

killings. Opponents of the democratically-elected Christiani government hope to block release of the funds with these new accusations.

El Salvador's government has already tried and convicted two army officers who ordered the murders. It has moved forcefully to purge the military of human rights abusers. No effort has been spared to negotiate a settlement with the leftist rebels of the Communist FMLN. It's hard to see what else the government could do to satisfy congressional critics.

It would be a more genuine display of sincerity if Moakley and company devoted even a fraction of the time they've spent investigating the Jesuit murders to probing the deaths of two U.S. airmen in El Salvador.

The military advisers were murdered in cold blood by the Communists after their helicopter was shot down in January. To date, there have been no congressional investigations of this infamy, no threats of retribution. Perhaps the Capitol sideshow should take a break from its witch-hunting and apply the same standards to America's enemies as it does to its friends.

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