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October 16, 1990

The Honorable William S. Sessions
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
9th and Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20535

Dear Mr. Sessions:

As chairman of the Speaker's Special Task Force on El Salvador, I am writing to request your assistance in regard to a very troubling matter that has arisen in connection with the investigation into the murder of six Jesuit priests and two women in El Salvador last November.

As you may know, on January 2, 1990, an American military officer assigned to our Embassy in San Salvador came forward with information concerning the possible participation in the crimes of Col. Guillermo Benavides, commander of the military school. Within two weeks, Col. Benavides was arrested and charged with ordering the murders.

The Speaker's Task Force on El Salvador interviewed the American military officer last spring. We have also seen a copy of the statement he submitted to the Salvadoran government last January. That statement was given to us by Salvadoran authorities, only after U.S. government officials refused to provide it. We have also received a verbal description of results of lie detector tests given to the officer by the FBI, also last January. In each case, the testimony of the officer is confined to events that occurred subsequent to the murders.

As you can imagine, I was very disturbed to learn recently that the American officer disclosed information to the FBI last January that concerns an event prior to the murders that, if true, casts a disturbing new light on the entire investigation into the Jesuits case. If the information is accurate, Salvadoran military authorities should have considered Col. Benavides the prime suspect immediately after the murders took place.

Even more disturbing is the fact that officials of our own government, aware of the American officer's additional statements, did not make them known to the government of El Salvador, to the judge, to the Speaker's Task Force or to the appropriate congressional committees.

CONGRESSMAN JOHN JOSEPH
MOAKLEY PAPERS
MS 100

The Honorable William S. Sessions

Page 2

I have several requests.

First, I would appreciate written confirmation of the verbal assurance I received from the Department of State last Friday that a comprehensive version of the American officer's comments have been submitted to the judge in El Salvador.

Second, I request an investigation by your office to determine why the statement made by the American officer concerning an event prior to the murders was not made available to Salvadoran authorities immediately after it was made. Who made this decision, and why? Did the FBI provide the US Embassy in San Salvador with the American officer's statement? If so, when?

Third, I would request that the FBI make available to the Speaker's Task Force, the full text of the American officer's statement and any relevant polygraph information. We would also ask that the person who administered the polygraph be made available for private questioning.

Obviously, this is an extremely important matter. I would appreciate a prompt response.

Sincerely,



John Joseph Moakley