

DIST: 17 MAY 1990

COUNTRY: EL SALVADOR

SUBJ: JOINT GENERAL STAFF HEADQUARTERS' EVALUATION OF PUBLIC
COMMENTS BY FORMER COLONEL SIGIFREDO OCHOA PEREZ ON
THE MURDER OF THE JESUIT PRIESTS

DOI: LATE APRIL 1990

TEXT: 1

2. IN LATE APRIL 1990 SENIOR OFFICERS OF THE JOINT GENERAL

Approved for Release

NOV 1993

STAFF (EMCFA) ANALYZED PUBLIC COMMENTS BY FORMER COLONEL SIGIFREDO ((OCHOA)) PEREZ, PRESIDENT OF THE EXECUTIVE HYDROELECTRIC COMMISSION OF THE LEMPA RIVER (CEL), IN WHICH OCHOA STATED THAT SENIOR OFFICERS OF THE ARMED FORCES MUST HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THE MURDER OF JESUIT PRIESTS IN SAN SALVADOR IN NOVEMBER 1989. THE OFFICERS CONCLUDED THAT OCHOA SHOULD BE FIRED FROM THE CEL FOR SLANDERING THE SALVADORAN GOVERNMENT (GOES) AND THE ARMED FORCES (ESAF). AT THE SAME TIME, THEY RECOGNIZED THAT FIRING OCHOA WOULD EVENTUALLY LEAD TO LABOR DIFFICULTIES AT CEL, AND POSSIBLY WITHIN LABOR AS A WHOLE.

3. THE OFFICERS AGREED THAT OCHOA'S COMMENTS REPRESENT A SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR THE GOES AND THE ESAF FOR SEVERAL REASONS: FIRST, OCHOA IS ONE OF THE THREE MOST WIDELY KNOWN AND RESPECTED MILITARY FIGURES IN EL SALVADOR, ALONG WITH FORMER MAJOR ROBERTO ((D'AUBUISSON)) AND DECEASED LIEUTENANT COLONEL DOMINGO ((MONTERROSA)); SECOND, OCHOA HAS A REPUTATION AS AN ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT FIGURE WILLING TO CONFRONT DIFFICULT ISSUES; THIRD, HE OCCUPIES AN IMPORTANT GOVERNMENT POSITION, AND IS CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH THE EXTREME RIGHT WING OF THE GOVERNING NATIONALIST REPUBLICAN ALLIANCE (ARENA) PARTY. THEREFORE, THE EMCFA OFFICERS AGREED THAT OCHOA IS SEEN AS A CREDIBLE, HIGH LEVEL SOURCE BY THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS. THE FACT THAT OCHOA IS A DISCREDITED FIGURE WHO IS CONSIDERED TO BE IRRATIONAL BY SENIOR MILITARY AND POLITICAL CIRCLES IS NOT WIDELY KNOWN: HIS REMARKS THEREFORE HAVE A CREDIBILITY UNMATCHED BY THOSE OF OTHER OFFICIALS. THE OFFICERS BELIEVE THAT WHILE FIRING OCHOA MIGHT ENHANCE HIS CREDIBILITY, IGNORING THE ISSUE WILL ENHANCE IT EVEN MORE.

4. THE EMCFA OFFICERS ALSO AGREED THAT WHILE OCHOA SHOULD GO, THIS WOULD PROBABLY LEAD TO LABOR PROBLEMS; EVEN IF HE DID NOT ENCOURAGE LABOR UNREST IN CEL, EXISTING TENSIONS THERE WOULD CAUSE PROBLEMS FOR THE GOES. THEREFORE, THE OFFICERS AGREED THAT THE GOES, AND NOT THE ESAF, SHOULD MAKE THE FINAL DECISION ON OCHOA'S FATE.

6. [REDACTED] ON 30 APRIL PRESIDENT ALFREDO ((CRISTIANI)) MET WITH CALDERON, OCHOA, AND D'AUBUISSON TO DISCUSS OCHOA'S REMARKS. CALDERON [REDACTED] OPENED THE DISCUSSION WITH HARSH CRITICISM OF OCHOA, ACCUSING OCHOA OF CREATING A DIFFICULT SITUATION FOR CRISTIANI AND ARENA. CALDERON [REDACTED] POINTED OUT THAT OCHOA'S COMMENTS WOULD WORSEN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ESAF AND THE GOVERNMENT, AND RAISED SERIOUS CHARGES AGAINST THE MOST SENIOR ESAF OFFICERS.

7. [REDACTED] CRISTIANI THEN SAID HE REALIZED OCHOA'S [REDACTED]

