

[REDACTED]

TOP: 202230Z JUN 90

202210Z JUN 9 [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

COUNTRY: EL SALVADOR

SUBJ: CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS SURROUNDING THE MURDER OF JESUIT  
PRIESTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL AMERICA

DOI: 15-16 NOVEMBER 1990

[REDACTED]

Approved for Release  
NOV 1993

2. [REDACTED]

ON 15 NOVEMBER 1989 AT APPROXIMATELY 1800 HOURS, MILITARY SCHOOL DEPUTY COMMANDER CARLOS CAMILO ((HERNANDEZ)) ORDERED, BY RADIO, ATLCATL BATTALION LIEUTENANTS YUSSHY RENE ((MENDOZA)) AND GONZALO ((GUEVARA)) TO REPORT TO THE MILITARY SCHOOL. UPON THEIR ARRIVAL, MAJOR HERNANDEZ ADVISED THEM THAT MILITARY SCHOOL COMMANDER COLONEL GUILLERMO ((BENAVIDES)) WISHED TO SPEAK WITH THEM, AND THE TWO LIEUTENANTS WENT IMMEDIATELY TO BENAVIDES' OFFICE. AFTER THE MEETING WITH BENAVIDES, THE TWO LIEUTENANTS ASSEMBLED THE ATLCATL BATTALION TROOPS PRESENT AT THE MILITARY SCHOOL AND BEGAN TO CALL OUT SEVERAL NAMES FROM EACH PLATOON,

USING ONLY NICKNAMES.

3. AT APPROXIMATELY 1900 HOURS, LIEUTENANT GUEVARA ORDERED SEVERAL SOLDIERS ON DUTY AT THE MILITARY ACADEMY TO ACCOMPANY HIM TO THE PUBLIC SECURITY ACADEMY (CETIPOL) IN SANTA TECLA TO PICK UP SOME UNIFORMS. THE GROUP, LEAD BY LIEUTENANT GUEVARA, ARRIVED AT CETIPOL AND WAS MET BY CETIPOL DIRECTOR COLONEL RIGOBERTO ((SOTO)) MARTINEZ, WHO GAVE THE GROUP APPROXIMATELY 15 BOXES OF NEW CAMOUFLAGE UTILITY UNIFORMS WITHOUT INSIGNIA OR PATCHES OF ANY KIND. THE GROUP RETURNED TO THE MILITARY ACADEMY AND THE NEW UNIFORMS WERE DISTRIBUTED TO THE BIRI ATLCATL TROOPS SELECTED BY LIEUTENANTS MENDOZA AND GUEVARA. AS THE SOLDIERS DRESSED IN THE NEW UNIFORMS AND PUT ON CAMOUFLAGE PAINT, MAJOR HERNANDEZ CIRCULATED AMONG THE SOLDIERS OFFERING THEM ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT.

4. [REDACTED] BETWEEN 2000 HOURS AND 2100 HOURS THE SELECTED GROUPS, ACCOMPANIED BY LIEUTENANTS GUEVARA AND MENDOZA, DEPARTED THE MILITARY SCHOOL IN A BEIGE MILITARY PICK-UP TRUCK. SHORTLY AFTERWARD, A SECOND BEIGE MILITARY PICK-UP TRUCK WITH SEVERAL SOLDIERS DEPARTED THE MILITARY SCHOOL AS WELL.

5. AT APPROXIMATELY 0400 HOURS ON THE MORNING OF [REDACTED]

16 NOVEMBER 1989 THE PICK-UP TRUCKS RETURNED TO THE MILITARY SCHOOL. COLONEL BENAVIDES MET THE TRUCKS AT THE FRONT GATE OF THE ACADEMY. AS THE TROOPS DISPERSED, ONE SOLDIER WAS OVERHEARD TO SAY THAT THE SOLDIERS HAD JUST KILLED "THE HEADS OF THE FARABUNDO MARTI NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (FMLN)." THE SOLDIER EXPRESSED HIS BELIEF THAT, AS A RESULT OF THESE KILLINGS, THE WAR WOULD END SOON BECAUSE COLONEL BENAVIDES HAD SAID KILLING THE "FMLN HEADS" WOULD END IT.

6. ON 16 NOVEMBER 1989 AT APPROXIMATELY 0900 HOURS COLONEL BENAVIDES GATHERED ALL OF THE SOLDIERS WHO HAD BEEN ON GUARD DUTY AT THE MILITARY SCHOOL ON 15 AND 16 NOVEMBER. COLONEL BENAVIDES ORDERED THE GROUP TO MAINTAIN TOTAL SILENCE ABOUT THE MURDERS OF THE JESUIT PRIESTS AND TWO OTHERS. HE INFORMED THEM THAT THE OFFICIAL STORY THEY WOULD ALL ADHERE TO WAS THAT THE FMLN HAD INFILTRATED THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL AMERICA CAMPUS AND MURDERED THE JESUITS AND TWO LAY PERSONS. COLONEL BENAVIDES

REITERATED THAT THE SOLDIERS WERE NOT TO SPEAK TO ANYONE ABOUT THE MURDERS OR "WE WILL ALL BE DEAD."

7. ON APPROXIMATELY 18 NOVEMBER 1989 LIEUTENANT MENDOZA PRIVATELY EXPRESSED REMORSE AT HAVING KILLED THE JESUIT PRIESTS AND EXPRESSED HIS HOPE THAT COLONEL BENAVIDES WOULD NOT "TURN US IN." LIEUTENANT MENDOZA SAID THAT HE HAD NOT WANTED TO KILL THE JESUIT PRIESTS BUT HAD RECEIVED A DIRECT ORDER TO DO SO. HE ADDED THAT THE KILLINGS WERE PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT FOR HIM BECAUSE ONE OF THE MURDERED PRIESTS, IGNACIO MARTIN ((BARO)), HAD BEEN HIS PROFESSOR AT ONE TIME. LIEUTENANT MENDOZA ALSO SAID THAT THEN AIR FORCE COMMANDER GENERAL JUAN RAFAEL ((BUSTILLO)) HAD OFFERED HIM PILOT TRAINING AS A REWARD FOR HIS (MENDOZA'S) PARTICIPATION IN THE KILLINGS.

8. [REDACTED] ON 15 NOVEMBER 1989 AT 1400 HOURS SEVERAL HIGH RANKING OFFICERS HAD ARRIVED AT THE MILITARY SCHOOL. THESE OFFICERS INCLUDED CHIEF OF THE JOINT STAFF COLONEL RENE EMILIO ((PONCE)); THEN AIR FORCE COMMANDER GENERAL BUSTILLO; THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL POLICE, COLONEL DIONISIO ISMAEL ((MACHUCA)); FIRST BRIGADE COMMANDER COLONEL FRANCISCO ((ELENA)) FUENTES; THEN-DIRECTOR OF THE TREASURY POLICE, LIEUTENANT COLONEL HECTOR HERIBERTO ((HERNANDEZ)) HERNANDEZ; THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL GUARD (GN), COLONEL JUAN CARLOS ((CARRILLO)) SCHLENKER, WHO ARRIVED WITH GN INTELLIGENCE CHIEF MAJOR RICARDO ((ARANGO)) MACAY; THE COMMANDER OF THE ATLATACL BATTALION, LIEUTENANT COLONEL OSCAR ALBERTO ((LEON)) LINARES; THE THEN-DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DIRECTORATE, COLONEL CARLOS MAURICIO ((GUZMAN)) AGUILAR; AND THE DIRECTOR OF THE MILITARY

[REDACTED]

HOSPITAL. [REDACTED] COMMENT: [THE SOLDIER] DID NOT KNOW THE REASON FOR THE MEETING AT THE MILITARY ACADEMY NOR DID HE KNOW WHAT WAS DISCUSSED THERE.) ([REDACTED] COMMENT: ALL OF THE ABOVE NAMED OFFICERS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR SECTORS WITHIN THE METROPOLITAN ZONE DURING THE NOVEMBER 1989 FMLN OFFENSIVE. ADDITIONALLY, THE MILITARY ACADEMY SERVED AS A ZONAL COMMAND POST, UNDER THE COMMAND OF COLONEL BENAVIDES.)

[REDACTED]

10. [REDACTED] COLONEL PONCE PROTECTED LIEUTENANT COLONEL HERNANDEZ FROM PROSECUTION IN THE JESUIT MURDER CASE. HERNANDEZ [REDACTED] WAS THE OFFICER WHO ASSEMBLED ALL THE OFFICERS NOW UNDER ARREST IN THE JESUIT CASE. [REDACTED] COMMENT: [REDACTED] DID NOT CLARIFY WHAT HE MEANT BY HERNANDEZ' ASSEMBLING THE OFFICERS. HERNANDEZ WAS DEPUTY COMMANDER OF THE MILITARY SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE JESUIT MURDERS. HE WAS TRANSFERRED TO BE DEPUTY COMMANDER OF THE BELLOSO BATTALION IN EARLY MARCH 1990. HERNANDEZ IS A MEMBER OF THE SALVADORAN MILITARY ACADEMY CLASS OF 1973. HE IS A FAVORITE OF PONCE, AND IN A MUCH TALKED ABOUT RECENT SHUFFLING OF CLASS RANKINGS, MOVED UP CONSIDERABLY TO BECOME NUMBER ONE IN HIS CLASS. HE WAS RECENTLY NAMED BY LIEUTENANT MENDOZA AS HAVING ORDERED THE DESTRUCTION OF LOGS AT THE MILITARY SCHOOL USED TO RECORD THE ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE OF VEHICLES THERE.)

11. (AMBASSADOR'S COMMENT: IF THE CALENDAR OF EVENTS DESCRIBED IN PARAS 2-4 IS ACCURATE, THEN WE HAVE TO REEXAMINE THE QUESTION OF WHERE, WHEN AND BY WHOM THE DECISION WAS MADE TO SEND ELEMENT OF ATACATL INTO THE UCA CAMPUS. TO DATE, A GREAT DEAL OF ATTENTION AND INTERPRETATION HAS GONE INTO RECONSTRUCTING THE 11 NOVEMBER EVENING MEETING OF THE ESAF HIGH COMMAND, TO DETERMINE IF SOMETHING SAID OR MISINTERPRETED DURING THAT DISCUSSION WAS THE GENESIS OF THE JESUIT OPERATION. AVAILABLE INFORMATION HAS THE HIGH COMMAND MEETING AT THE ESTADO MAYOR BEGINNING AT 1900 HOURS AND ENDING SOME THREE AND A HALF HOURS LATER. THIS SOURCE'S SEQUENCE OF EVENTS HAS MAJOR HERNANDEZ ORDERING THE TWO LIEUTENANTS TO REPORT TO COLONEL BENAVIDES SOMETIME BETWEEN 1800 AND 1900 HOURS. THAT WOULD INDICATE A PRE-1800 HOURS DECISION, HENCE NOT ONE TAKEN AT THE HIGH COMMAND MEETING.

12. THERE ARE OTHER AREAS OF CONFLICT BETWEEN THIS STORY AND OTHER VERSIONS. FOR EXAMPLE, IN THEIR ORIGINAL DECLARATIONS

[REDACTED]

THE THREE IMPLICATED LIEUTENANTS (ESPINOZA, MENDOZA AND CERITOS) ALL TOLD OF RECEIVING THE ORDER FROM COLONEL BENAVIDES ON, OR ABOUT 2330 HOURS. ALTHOUGH THE THREE STATEMENTS HAVE BEEN DISAVOWED IN THEIR OFFICIAL TESTIMONY, WE HAVE WORKED UNDER THE

ASSUMPTION THAT THIS IS WHEN THE LIEUTENANTS WERE GIVEN THE COMMAND, NOT, AS THIS REPORT STATES, SOME FOUR-FIVE HOURS EARLIER.)

[REDACTED]