



28 June 1990

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Secretary Cheney's Question Concerning Political Killings in El Salvador

1. We rely on data provided by [REDACTED] for our analysis of the level of political violence in El Salvador. While [REDACTED] does not claim that its numbers are precise, or an accounting of all violent events, [REDACTED] the data do provide an accurate indication of the trends. [REDACTED] is the only source of statistics on political killings in El Salvador that has maintained a consistent methodology since 1980. For example, [REDACTED] data show that the monthly average has declined from almost 800 political killings in 1980 to fewer than 20 beginning in 1987. [REDACTED]

2. The Methodology. [REDACTED] is based on accounts of violence in the Salvadoran press, guerrilla reporting of violent incidents in their own media, and other publicly available sources. Categorizing a death as a "political" killing is based on the [REDACTED] of the evidence and whether a political motive exists. [REDACTED]

3. Suspicious Killings. [REDACTED] also tracks killings when there is no clear political motive but such a motive cannot be ruled out. These "suspicious" killings have tended to remain steady at about 20 per month for the past three years. The [REDACTED] estimates that about half the incidents in this category probably are ordinary criminal killings. [REDACTED]

Information was prepared by [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
American Analysis.

Office of African and Latin

Approved for Release

NOV 1993

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]