SUBJECT: THE 316TH MI BATTALION

TEXT:

1. 

2. INFORMATION WAS GLEANED FROM NUMEROUS FILES, AND ALTHOUGH HQS WAS UNABLE TO FIND A DEFINITIVE STUDY ON THE BATTALION, HOPE THE FOLLOWING HELPS.

3. 

Approved for Release
Date SEPT 199X
DURING THE EARLY 1980S FUSEP HAD THREE DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONS UNDER ITS CONTROL: (A) THE NATIONAL DIRECTORATE OF INVESTIGATION (DNI); (B) A SPECIAL UNIT WHICH PROVIDED TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO THE ARMS INTERDICTION PROGRAM (MATERIAL FROM NICARAGUA PASSED THROUGH HONDURAS TO GUERRILLAS IN EL SALVADOR), AND (C) THE REGULAR NATIONAL POLICE UNITS STATIONED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. IN ADDITION, THE DNI MAINTAINED A SECRET UNIT - THE HONDURAN ANTI-COMMUNIST LIBERATION ARMY (ELACH), A RIGHTIST PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATION WHICH CONDUCTED OPERATIONS AGAINST HONDURAN LEFTISTS. ACCORDING TO , DURING THE PERIOD ELACH OPERATED (1980-1984), ELACH'S OPERATIONS INCLUDED SURVEILLANCE, KIDNAPPINGS, INTERROGATION UNDER DURESS, AND EXECUTION OF PRISONERS WHO WERE HONDURAN REVOLUTIONARIES. ELACH REPORTEDLY MAINTAINED AN INFORMAL LIAISON WITH MEMBERS OF THE SPECIAL UNIT EXPRESSED STRONG CONCERN TO THE HONDURAN GOVERNMENT AND FUSEP IN PARTICULAR OVER THE USE OF REPRESSIVE MEASURES BY THE SECURITY SERVICES. IN AN EFFORT TO CONVINCE FUSEP THAT ABUSIVE TECHNIQUES SHOULD NOT BE USED AND DID NOT HAVE TO BE USED IN INTERROGATING A DETAINED, REPEATEDLY INSTRUCTED AGAINST THE USE OF PHYSICAL ABUSE OR TORTURE.

INTEGRATE THE INTEL PRODUCTION. IN EARLY 1984 THE SPECIAL UNIT WAS PLACED UNDER THE COMMAND OF THE MILITARY INTEL DIVISION AND RENAMED THE 316TH BATTALION, WHERE IT CONTINUED TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO THE ARMS INTERDICTION PROGRAM. WITH THE TRANSFER OF THE SPECIAL UNIT FROM FUSEP TO MILITARY INTEL,

IN 1980 THE SPECIAL UNIT WAS LOCATED INSIDE THE FUSEP COMPOUND, BUT SOMETIME IN 1981 OR 1982 IT MOVED TO ANOTHER SITE ABOUT A MILE FROM THE COMPOUND, A MOVE DETERMINED NECESSARY BY THE GROWTH IN THE UNIT AND THE NEED TO AFFORD A MEASURE OF SECURITY TO ITS PERSONNEL NOT POSSIBLE INSIDE THE POLICE COMPOUND. WHEN COLONEL ALVAREZ WAS TRANSFERRED FROM FUSEP AND APPOINTED AS CHIEF OF THE HONDURAN ARMED FORCES, HE WAS REPLACED (1981-82 TIME FRAME) BY COLONEL DANIEL CASTILLO. WHILE BALI HAD NOMINAL CONTROL OVER THE SPECIAL UNIT, HERNANDEZ ALSO REPORTED TO AND WORKED INCREASINGLY CLOSELY WITH ALVAREZ IN HIS NEW COMMAND. IN 1982 CAPTAIN HERNANDEZ WAS TRANSFERRED OVERSEAS TO ARGENTINA AND REPLACED BY A HONDURAN ARMY OFFICER, MAJOR LUIS ALONSO DIAZ. UNDER BOTH HERNANDEZ AND PADILLA, THE SPECIAL UNIT WAS RESPONSIVE FIRST TO ALVAREZ AND SECOND TO BALI. IT SEEMED NATURAL THAT ALVAREZ WOULD
HAVE MAINTAINED A KEEN INTEREST IN THE WELL BEING OF A UNIT WHICH HE HAD HELPED TO GROW FROM ITS INCEPTION. PERSONALITIES BEING WHAT THEY WERE IN HONDURAS, ALVAREZ WOULD HAVE WANTED TO ENSURE HIS BEING ON TOP OF WHAT HAD BECOME AN EFFECTIVE UNIT, WHICH BY THE MIDDLE OF 1983 HAD AN INDETERMINATE MIX OF MILITARY AND POLICE PERSONNEL. ANOTHER POINT WORTH REMEMBERING WAS THAT Fusep, WHILE A CIVILIAN POLICE ORGANIZATION, WAS DURING THIS TIME FRAME UNDER THE CONTROL OF A MILITARY OFFICER.) WHETHER OR NOT THE SPECIAL UNIT WAS UNDER Fusep CONTROL WHILE ALVAREZ WAS Fusep COMMANDER, OR WAS SUBORDINATED IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER TO ALVAREZ WHILE CINC OF ARMED FORCES, THE MISSION OF THE UNIT WAS ESSENTIALLY THE SAME, NAMELY TO COMBAT BOTH DOMESTIC AND REGIONAL SUBVERSIVE MOVEMENTS OPERATING IN ANY THROUGH HONDURAS. THIS INCLUDED PENETRATING VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE HONDURAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCH), THE CENTRAL AMERICAN REGIONAL TROTSKYITE PARTY (PRTCH), AND THE POPULAR REVOLUTIONARY FORCES-LORENZO ZELAYA (FPR-LZ) MARXIST TERRORIST ORGANIZATION.

6. FROM JANUARY UNTIL APRIL 1984, LT. COL. LUIS ALONSO ((DISCUIA)) ELVIR, INTEL CHIEF OF THE HONDURAN ARMY GENERAL STAFF, ASSUMED COMMAND OF THE 316TH BATTALION, REPLACING PADILLA. THIS CHANGE IN COMMAND WAS CARRIED OUT BECAUSE OF THE UNIT'S POOR PERFORMANCE DURING THE COMMAND OF PADILLA.


7. ACCORDING TO SOON AFTER THE REMOVAL OF ALVAREZ AS COMMANDER OF THE HONDURAN ARMED FORCES IN
MARCH 84, LEFTIST PRESIDENT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN HONDURAS (CODEH) RAMON ((CUSTODIO)) LOPEZ MET WITH HIGH-LEVEL MILITARY LEADERS AND TOLD THEM THAT THE 316TH MILITARY INTEL BATTALION WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ALMOST ALL PERSONS ON THE CODEH LIST OF MISSING PERSONS. THE MILITARY OFFICERS INVESTIGATED CUSTODIO'S ALLEGATIONS BUT ARGUED THAT THEY FOUND NO EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THEM.


9. JAMES LEMONYE, A REPORTER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE, WAS THE AUTHOR OF NUMEROUS ARTICLES ON THE SUBJECT OF HONDURAN DEATH SQUAD ACTIVITIES. APPROXIMATELY EVERY SIX MONTHS HE PUBLISHED A NEW ARTICLE WITH A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT TWIST, BUT HIS ARTICLES GENERALLY CONTAINED THE SAME BASIC INFORMATION. BASED ON THESE ARTICLES AND OTHERS WRITTEN ON THE SAME SUBJECT, WAS ASKED TO ANSWER QUERIES FROM CONGRESS ABOUT INVOLVEMENT IN, AND KNOWLEDGE OF, ALLEGED HONDURAN DEATH SQUADS DURING THE 1980S. MANY OF THE ALLEGATIONS AGAINST THE 316TH SEEM TO HAVE COME FROM ONE MAN, FLORENCIO ((CABALLERO)) BONILLA (AKA FLORENTINO ((CARBAYO)) BUSTILLO), WHO CLAIMED THE BATTALION WAS TRAINED AND ADVISED ON INTEL MATTERS BY AMERICANS. CABALLERO CLAIMED TO HAVE SERVED IN MILITARY INTEL UNITS FROM 1979 UNTIL 1984 AND TO HAVE BEEN TRAINED BY AMERICANS AND OTHER FOREIGNERS IN INTERROGATION TECHNIQUES. ACCORDING TO CABALLERO, THE AMERICAN ADVISORS DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN INTERROGATIONS OR TORTURE, BUT DID ADVISE ON WHOM TO PUT UNDER SURVEILLANCE AND
WHAT QUESTIONS TO ASK THOSE WHO HAD BEEN DETAINED. CABALLERO
SAID THE AMERICAN ADVISERS TRIED TO PERSUADE THE HONDURANS TO USE
PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESSURES, RATHER THAN PHYSICAL TORTURE, BUT
HONDURAN COMMANDERS PREFERRED TO CONTINUE USING VIOLENT METHODS.
CABALLERO CLAIMED THE 316TH KIDNAPPED SUSPECTED LEFTISTS, TOOK
THEM TO SECRET DETENTION CENTERS, TORTURED THEM, AND EVENTUALLY
KILLED MOST OF THEM.  

INDICATE THAT CABALLERO
JOINED THE HONDURAN ARMED FORCES IN 1977, AND IN 1979 OR 80 WAS
ASSIGNED TO A MILITARY INTEL UNIT. IN 1984 HE DESERTED FROM THE
MILITARY, TRAVELED TO MEXICO AND SOUGHT ASYLUM IN CANADA.

HAD NO EVIDENCE TO SUBSTANTIATE CABALLERO'S CLAIMS THAT
HE PARTICIPATED IN DEATH SQUAD ACTIVITIES OR IF HE EVEN ACTUALLY
SERVED AS AN INTERROGATOR.

10. THE OTHER PERSON ALLEGING HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES WAS INES
CONSUELO ((MURILLO)) SCHWADER, WHO WAS A MEMBER OF THE FPR-LZ, A
GROUP THAT WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR SEVERAL BOMBINGS. SHE WAS HELD IN
PRISON AND PROBABLY WAS A VICTIM OF ABUSIVE TREATMENT.

11. 

THERE HAD BEEN INFREQUENT ALLEGATIONS
MADE AGAINST THE 316TH IN THE LOCAL PRESS BY LEFTISTS AND LEFTIST
ORGANIZATIONS. NONE OF THE ARTICLES CONTAINED ANY SPECIFIC
ACCUSATIONS OR DETAILS, SIMPLY REFERENCES TO THE 316TH AS A
SECRET MILITARY UNIT WHICH HAD ABUSED OR WAS ABUSING HUMAN RIGHTS. OCCASIONALLY IT HAD BEEN REFERRED TO AS A "DEATH SQUAD," HOWEVER, NO DETAILED CHARGES HAD BEEN MADE.

12. IN SUMMARY, HAD NO PROOF OF ANY DEATH SQUAD ACTIVITIES BY THE 316TH MI BATTALION, NOR OF ANY SPECIFIC ALLEGATIONS OF SUCH ACTIVITIES BY THE 316TH MI BATTALION OR ITS PREDECESSOR ORGANIZATION. THE THRUST OF AVAILABLE INTEL OF DEATH SQUAD ACTIVITIES IN HONDURAS LIMITS SUCH ACTIVITY TO THE 1981-83 TIME FRAME AND PLACES RESPONSIBILITY FOR IT WITH THE ELACH.

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