

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

[REDACTED]

DIST: 12 MARCH 1991

COUNTRY: EL SALVADOR

SUBJ: DISCUSSIONS AMONG SENIOR SALVADORAN MILITARY OFFICERS
REGARDING THE JESUIT CASE

DOI: EARLY MARCH 1991

[REDACTED]

TEXT: 1. IN EARLY MARCH 1991

[REDACTED] "VERY CLOSED
DISCUSSIONS" AMONG SOME ESAF COLONELS AND LIEUTENANT COLONELS
REGARDING THE JESUIT CASE. [REDACTED] WHILE THE
OFFICIAL POLICY OF THE JOINT GENERAL COMMAND (EMCFA) REMAINS ONE OF
SILENCE ABOUT THE CASE, SOME SENIOR ESAF OFFICERS DISCUSS THIS ISSUE
IN CONFIDENCE. [REDACTED] THE CONSENSUS OF THESE OFFICERS IS THAT
THOSE ACCUSED IN THE CASE ARE GUILTY, BUT WILL RECEIVE LITTLE OR NO
PUNISHMENT. THEY AGREE THAT THIS WILL HAVE VERY SERIOUS
REPERCUSSIONS ON SALVADORAN RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES.

2. [REDACTED] WHILE NO ESAF OFFICER WOULD
DISCUSS THIS CASE OFFICIALLY OR OPENLY, THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF
THE OFFICERS WHO COMMENT PRIVATELY BELIEVE THAT COLONEL GUILLERMO
((BENAVIDES)) DID IN FACT ORDER THE KILLING OF THE JESUITS. THESE
OFFICERS SPECULATE THAT BENAVIDES DID NOT MAKE THE DECISION ALONE;
HOWEVER, THEY DO NOT HAVE A GOOD SENSE OF WHETHER ANYONE HIGHER UP IN
THE ESAF STRUCTURE WAS INVOLVED IN THE ACTUAL DECISION. THE
OFFICERS, AMONG THEM JOINT STAFF OPERATIONS DIRECTOR COLONEL ROMAN
ALFONSO ((BARRERA)), BELIEVE THE DELIBERATE MANNER IN WHICH THE
TROOPS CARRIED OUT THE MURDERS GIVES SENIOR OFFICERS THE IMPRESSION
THAT THEY WERE CARRYING OUT SPECIFIC ORDERS.

3. DESPITE THIS CONSENSUS, SENIOR OFFICERS ALSO BELIEVE THE
OFFICERS ACCUSED IN THE CASE WILL PROBABLY BE ACQUITTED OF AT LEAST
THE MAJOR CHARGES, AND POSSIBLY EXONERATED COMPLETELY. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Approved for Release

NOV 1993

