

[REDACTED]

30 November 1990

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Update on the Jesuit Killings

1. Despite continual prodding from US officials, the investigation into the Jesuit murder has progressed little since last June. [REDACTED] indicates that neither President Cristiani's appearance before Judge Zamora in September, nor the testimony of some senior officers have eased suspicions that the decision to kill the priests was made by the top levels of the military. Contradictory testimony by military personnel, the disappearance of key evidence, and the reluctance of senior officers to volunteer information bolsters these suspicions.

[REDACTED]

2. Further clouding the government's record is the promotion in September of Col. Ponce to Defense Minister. The possibility of his implication in the decision to kill the Jesuits or the subsequent apparent cover-up has made it difficult for Cristiani to prove his government's willingness to punish all those responsible. [REDACTED] no evidence of Ponce's direct involvement in the murders, but he has, at a minimum, acquiesced in the cover-up, [REDACTED]

3. In the wake of Congressional conditions placed on US military aid to El Salvador, senior military officials appear to be searching for a way out of the impasse.* [REDACTED] indicates that the High Command now appears ready to consider allowing the court to drop charges

* In November the United States suspended half of the \$85 million FY91 military assistance and Congress placed conditions on the release of the second half. The remaining \$42.5 million could be slashed if the government--especially the Army--fails to demonstrate to the Congress by 5 January 1991, real progress in finding and punishing those responsible. President Bush must certify that progress has been made. [REDACTED]

Approved for Release

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