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26 March 1980

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Archbishop of El Salvador Assassinated

The Roman Catholic Archbishop of El Salvador, Oscar Arnulfo Romero, was killed by an assassin's bullet on the evening of 24 March, as he was saying Mass in the chapel of the Divine Providence Hospital in San Salvador. The murder appears to have been carefully planned and carried out by a professional. The Archbishop was hit directly in the heart by a fragmenting .22-caliber bullet, fired just as he had concluded his sermon. Eyewitness reports about the perpetrators have been confusing, ranging from an early report that it was done by four well-dressed older men to speculation that the shot was fired through a camera or timed with a camera flash. There are equally sufficient grounds for reasoning that the murder was committed by the terrorist left as by the terrorist right. A leftist organization not previously known, the Popular Revolutionary Army, has claimed credit in a communique distributed in San Salvador. Up to the present, however, the murderers have not been identified.

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Approved for Release

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