

[REDACTED]

14 June 1984

LEFTIST DEATH SQUADS

Salvadoran guerrilla factions generally began as small cells of urban middle class terrorists who used kidnapping, torture, and murder as political tools. The overwhelming majority of victims of leftist violence have been common rural citizens. For example, during 1980 and 1981--the two years of greatest political violence--the insurgents publicly took credit for thousands of "ajusticiamientos" (judicious executions) of rural inhabitants allegedly collaborating with the military, the government, or semi-autonomous reform agencies. Guerrilla factions continue routinely to claim responsibility for local assassination, [REDACTED] Methods of operation suggest that politically motivated killings by the left are generally carried out by specifically assigned teams of urban militants and rural guerrillas. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] cited guerrilla plans to assassinate high Salvadoran officials and political party leaders. [REDACTED]

Distinguishing between leftist or rightist responsibility for civilian deaths remains difficult. [REDACTED] that of the 165 registered political deaths between 1 March and 30 April 22 were attributed to the insurgent left and the rest were committed by "unknown assailants." [REDACTED]

Approved for Release

NOV 1993

[REDACTED]