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FRIDAY, 21 JUNE 1985

EL SALVADOR: Terrorist Attack

The unprecedented attack in San Salvador on Wednesday suggests the growing desperation of urban guerrillas and may herald a dramatic escalation of terrorism in El Salvador.

[REDACTED] the terrorists fired initially at US Marines in the sidewalk cafe, then at other tables where Salvadoran civilians were seated, and finally at passing traffic.

Comment: Security in the area of the attack has always been lax, even though it abuts the homes of wealthy Salvadorans, government officials, and foreign diplomats. The magnitude of the act goes beyond previous incidents of even the radical guerrilla splinter groups, who have sought targets of opportunity among the ruling establishment and US personnel. It is unlikely that the mainstream insurgent alliance, which is increasingly concerned over its eroding international image, would have authorized such an operation. The rebel hierarchy now faces a dilemma over how to dissociate themselves from the massacre without completely alienating the dissident urban cells.

Approved for Release

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