

[REDACTED]

EL SALVADOR: Officers Want Jesuit Murders Solved

Many Salvadoran officers [REDACTED] are dissatisfied with the way their leaders have handled the investigation of the Jesuit murders. [REDACTED] A senior officer [REDACTED] has said an increasing number believe the High Command ordered the killings. Colonel Benavides, the most senior officer charged so far, [REDACTED] is ready to say he acted on orders from armed forces Chief of Staff Ponce that the priests be killed. Meanwhile, a group of officers reportedly has given Ponce a list of corrupt commanders it wants removed, mostly members of the powerful military academy class of 1966 known as the Tandonas. [REDACTED]

Comment: No evidence has emerged directly implicating the High Command in the killings, but many Salvadoran officers apparently are concerned that a high-level coverup is damaging the armed forces and jeopardizing US aid. Many junior and senior officers may also be trying to link Ponce to the murders to head off his long-delayed appointment as minister of defense and to break the dominance of the Tandonas. At a minimum, Ponce is acquiescing in the military's stonewalling on the civilian investigation of the case, including destruction and concealment of evidence. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Approved for Release

[REDACTED]

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