




JESUIT PRIESTS MURDER

-Six Jesuit priests and two church workers were murdered on 16 November 1989.

-On 12 January GOES arrested nine soldiers (six officers and two enlisted men) for the murders, a third enlisted man who deserted in December is still at large.

-The judge in the case, Ricardo Zamora on 29 January denied a defense motion to release the suspects for lack of evidence.

-Prospects are problematic for bringing to trial Col. Benavides-the senior ranking officer in custody who reportedly issued the order to kill the Jesuits.

-Salvadoran law prohibits testimony by accomplices,  and thus far only the officers under arrest have implicated Benavides.

-Benavides was removed from his post as Commander of the Military School on 1 February 1990.

-Benavides has not been discharged from the military, a move which must occur before he or the other soldiers can be tried in a civilian court.

-It is rumored, the deserted enlisted man involved in the killings will surface soon in Mexico, where he will admit to his involvement and possibly implicate more senior officers.

Approved for Release

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