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Date/DTG: Jun 17, 1983 / 170000Z Jun 83
From: AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE ROUTINE
E.O.: Unknown
TAGS: SHUM, OTRA, ES
Reference: 83 SAN SALVADOR 5311
Subject: VISIT BY DAS MATTHEWS

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7319

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E.O. 12356: DECL: 6/17/89
TAGS: SHUM, ES
SUBJECT: VISIT BY DAS MATTHEWS

REF: SAN SALVADOR 5311

1. ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ ENTIRE TEXT.

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2. DEPARTMENT HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICERS GARY MATTHEWS AND ROBERT SNYDER, VISITED EL SALVADOR DURING JUNE 6-8, 1983. THEY MET WITH THE HEADS OF THE NATIONAL POLICE AND THE TREASURY POLICE, THE GOES HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, AMNESTY COMMISSION (REPORTED REFTEL), THE OFFICE OF LEGAL ASSISTANCE OF THE ARCHBISHOPRIC, CAMPESINO AND LABOR LEADERS, AND PRIVATE LAWYERS INVOLVED WITH HUMAN RIGHTS CASES. THE DELEGATION ALSO VISITED THE DEPARTMENT OF USULUTAN WHERE THEY MET THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMANDER AND INSPECTED AID PROJECTS IN THE TOWN OF BERLIN. THEY ALSO VISITED ILOPANGO WOMEN'S PRISON.

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3. MEETING WITH COL. LOPEZ NUILA, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE NATIONAL POLICE: COL. LOPEZ NUILA TOLD THE DELEGATION THAT HE HAD BEEN WORKING HARD TO CONTROL ABUSES COMMITTED BY SECURITY FORCE AGENTS AND POINTED OUT THAT THE HUMAN

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RIGHTS SOP MANUAL RECENTLY ADOPTED BY ALL THE ARMED FORCES WAS BASED ON A NATIONAL POLICE DOCUMENT. HE SHOWED THE DELEGATION A SERIES OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WHICH HE WAS PREPARING FOR USE IN TEACHING TROOPS ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS. ASKED ABOUT THE EXISTENCE OF CLANDESTINE JAILS AND THE USE OF TORTURE, SHE REPLIED HE DOUBTED SUCH JAILS EXISTED AND SAID THAT THE NATIONAL POLICE DID NOT TORTURE PRISONERS. HOWEVER, HE SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT MAY HAVE HAPPENED TO PRISONERS BEFORE THEY ARRIVED AT THE NATIONAL POLICE, MOST OF WHOM WERE HANDED OVER TO HIM FROM THE ARMY. COL LOPEZ NUILA REVIEWED THE DR. IBARRA CASE AND READ FROM A DECLARATION BY THE DOCTOR THAT HE WAS SECOND IN COMMAND OF A MEDICAL UNIT WORKING FOR THE ARMED FORCES OF LIBERATION (FAL), THE ARMED WING OF THE SALVADORAN COMMUNIST PARTY. AFTER THE MEETING, THE DELEGATION INSPECTED THE NATIONAL POLICE INTERROGATION ROOMS.

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4. MEETING WITH TREASURY POLICE DIRECTOR GENERAL, COL. NICOLAS CARRANZA. COL. CARRANZA SAID HE WAS WELL AWARE OF THE BAD IMAGE THE TREASURY POLICE HAS INTERNATIONALLY, AND HE PROMISED TO CHANGE BOTH THE IMAGE AND THE REALITY THAT GAVE RISE TO IT. HE SAID HE PLANNED TO PUT HIS AGENTS TO WORK FIGHTING THE GUERRILLAS SO THEY WOULD HAVE NO FREE TIME TO COMMIT ABUSES. ASKED ABOUT THE DEATH SQUADS, COL. CARRANZA SAID HE HAD HEARD OF THE WHITE HAND AND OTHER GROUPS BUT REALLY KNEW NOTHING ABOUT THEM. HE THOUGHT THEY MIGHT BE MADE UP OF OFF-DUTY SECURITY FORCE MEMBERS OR INDIVIDUALS HIRED BY THE RICH. ON THE POSSIBILITY OF GUARDING THE BODY DUMPS, HE STATED THAT THE ATLACATL BATTALION HAD FOR A TIME GUARDED THE DUMP AT EL PLAYON, BUT HE SAW NO ROLE FOR THE TREASURY POLICE IN

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SUCH WORK. ON AMNESTY, HE NOTED THAT THE CURRENT LAW WAS DEFECTIVE IN THAT IT DID NOT REQUIRE THE BENEFICIARIES TO REGISTER REGULARLY WITH THE POLICE WHICH WOULD PREVENT THEM FROM REJOINING THE GUERRILLAS. HE SAID HE REALIZED, HOWEVER, THAT THE ARMY NEEDED TO APPLY MILITARY PRESSURE ON THE GUERRILLAS TO MAKE THE AMNESTY TRULY EFFECTIVE AND USEFUL.

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5. MEETING WITH MARIA JULIA HERNANDEZ OF THE OFFICE OF LEGAL ASSISTANCE: SRTA. HERNANDEZ STATED THAT THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION WOULD NOT IMPROVE IN EL SALVADOR UNTIL THE MILITARY AND SECURITY FORCES, THE PRINCIPAL ABUSERS OF HUMAN RIGHTS, WERE BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL AND FORCED TO RESPECT THE LAW. SHE ARGUED THAT THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS HAD BECOME INSTITUTIONALIZED, AND OFFERED AS AN EXAMPLE, THE RECENT CASE OF A PRISONER HELD BY THE NATIONAL POLICE WHO WAS REPORTED TO HAVE HANGED HIMSELF IN HIS CELL. WHEN THE OFFICE OF LEGAL ASSISTANCE SENT A DOCTOR TO EXAMINE THE BODY, IT WAS DISCOVERED THAT IT HAD BROKEN ARMS, WHICH CAST DOUBT ON THE POLICE VERSION OF THE INCIDENT. ANOTHER EXAMPLE WAS THE LA FLORIDA INCIDENT WHERE THE PRINCIPAL WITNESS TO THE CRIME WAS LATER FOUND DECAPITATED. IN HER VIEW, US POLICY TOWARD EL SALVADOR WAS CONTRADICTORY SINCE, ON THE ONE HAND, IT CLAIMED TO BE INTERESTED IN IMPROVING THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION, WHILE ON THE OTHER, IT CONTINUED TO SEND MILITARY AID TO THE PERPETRATORS OF THE MAJORITY OF THE ABUSES. ON AMNES- TY, HERNANDEZ SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THE NEW LAW WAS A WELL-INTENTIONED AND POSITIVE STEP, UNFORTUNATELY THE JAILS STILL KEPT FILLING UP WITH PRISONERS.

6. MEETING WITH THE GOES HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (HRC).

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MONS. FREDDY DELGADO INFORMED THE DELEGATION THAT THE HRC HAD MADE LIMITED BUT DEFINITE PROGRESS IN ITS ACTIVITIES SINCE ITS VISIT TO WASHINGTON IN APRIL. HRC RELATIONS WITH THE SECURITY FORCES HAD IMPROVED TO THE POINT WHERE THEY WERE NOW OPEN TO VISITS IN WHEREABOUTS CASES, AND THE COMMISSION NOW RECEIVES A REPORT ON ALL ARRESTS MADE BY THE SECURITY FORCES EVERY FRIDAY. IN ADDITION, THE HRC HAD BEEN ABLE TO ESTABLISH THE PRINCIPLE THAT THE SECURITY FORCES COULD NOT ENTER THE PRISONS WITHOUT THE PERMISSION OF THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE. REGARDING THE STATUS OF THE HRC'S BUDGET PROPOSAL BEING CONSIDERED BY AID, THE MEMBERS SAID THEY DID NOT KNOW WHETHER IT HAD BEEN APPROVED BUT THAT SUPPORT WAS NECESSARY TO CARRY OUT THEIR PLAN TO ESTABLISH REGIONAL OFFICES OF THE COMMISSION. MONS. DELGADO SAID MORE INVESTIGATORS WERE NEEDED TO COPE WITH THEIR CASELOAD WHICH WAS UP TO 60 PER WEEK. THE HRC ALSO HAS PLANS TO ESTABLISH A CENTRAL REGISTRY OF ARREST CASES IN ORDER TO TRACK THEIR PROGRESS THROUGH THE COURT SYSTEM. ON THE LA FLORIDA CASE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CESTONI SAID THE COMMISSION HAD NO FURTHER INFORMATION AND LACKED THE RESOURCES TO PURSUE THE CASE FURTHER. CONCERNING THE LAS HOJAS INCIDENT, CESTONI SAID THE COMMISSION HAD GIVEN ITS REPORT TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL AND THAT THE INVESTIGATION WAS CONTINUING. HE WAS QUERIED ABOUT THE STATUS OF THE CAPTAIN WHO HAD BEEN

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DETAINED IN THE CASE, COL. LOPEZ NUILA, ALSO A MEMBER OF THE NRC, EXPLAINED THAT THE CAPTION WAS UNDER DETENTION AND THEORETICALLY COULD BE TRIED WITHOUT BEING EXPELLED (DADO DE BAJA) FROM THE ARMY. HE SAID THAT NORMALLY A SOLDIER WOULD ONLY BE EXPELLED AFTER HE WAS CONVICTED OF A CRIME. HOWEVER, IF HE COMMITTED A PREMEDITATED CRIME, HE COULD BE EXPELLED WITHOUT WAITING FOR A DECISION FROM THE CIVIL COURTS.

7. LUNCH WITH AMNESTY BOARD MEMBERS REPORTED IN REFTTEL.

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8. DINNER WITH CAMPESINO AND LABOR LEADERS AND PRIVATE LAWYERS. THE DELEGATION DISCUSSED THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN EL SALVADOR WITH CRISTOBAL ALEMAN OF THE UPD, SAMUEL MALDONADO OF THE UCS, AND DR. JORGE MARTINEZ AND DR. HECTOR HERNANDEZ, BOTH OF WHOM ARE PRIVATE LAWYERS. DR. MARTINEZ LED THE ATTACK ON US POLICY IN EL SALVADOR, ARGUING THAT THE US SHOULD STOP "LYING" ABOUT THE SITUATION THROUGH THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS, WHICH WAS A FARCE, AND FACE UP TO THE FACT THAT THE SITUATION HAD NOT IMPROVED DESPITE A DROP IN THE LEVEL OF VIOLENCE. HE STATED THAT THE ABUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS WAS INSTITUTIONALIZED

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AND COULD ONLY BE STOPPED BY DRAMATIC CHANGES IN THE ARMED FORCES. DR. MARTINEZ TOLD THE STORY OF HOW HE HAD BEEN ASKED IF HE WOULD SERVE AS THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION. HE DECLINED THE OFFER, IN PART BECAUSE HE THOUGHT HIS POSITION AS AN EVANGELICAL WOULD BE EXPLOITED, BUT MAINLY BECAUSE HE COULD NOT BEAR THE THOUGHT OF WORKING WITH COL. LOPEZ NUILA, WHO HAD ONCE DETAINED HIM FOR NO REASON AND HAD EVEN REFUSED TO ADMIT TO HIS WIFE THAT HE WAS HOLDING HIM. DR. HERNANDEZ ARGUED THAT THE US SHOULD EITHER PULL OUT ALTOGETHER

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OR SEND IN ITS TROOPS, SINCE THE SITUATION COULD NOT CONTINUE MUCH LONGER IN ITS PRESENT STATE. ALEMAN AND MALDONADO AGREED THAT THE SITUATION WAS DESPERATE, PARTICULARLY IN THE COUNTRYSIDE WHERE THEY THOUGHT THE CAMPESINOS MIGHT BE READY TO TURN TO THE GUERRILLAS AS THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE. BOTH CLAIMED THAT THEIR LIVES HAD BEEN THREATENED SEVERAL TIMES.

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9. VISIT TO USULUTAN DEPARTMENT. USULUTAN: DELEGATION, ACCOMPANIED BY POLOFF AND DATT, FLEW TO THE CONFLICT-RIDDEN DEPARTMENT OF USULUTAN IN EASTERN EL SALVADOR. THE GROUP FIRST MET WITH DEPARTMENTAL COMMANDER LT COL. VASCONCELOS, DEPARTMENTAL GOVERNOR INFANTOZZI, AND LOCAL MAYOR JORGE FERNANDEZ IN USULUTAN CITY. ALL THREE OFFICIALS SAID THEY WERE HOPEFUL THAT THE SOON TO BE LAUNCHED OPERATION MAQUILISHUAT WOULD IMPROVE THE SERIOUS ECONOMIC/SECURITY SITUATION IN THE DEPARTMENT, BUT VASCONCELOS EXPRESSED SOME MISGIVINGS, ESPECIALLY THE FEAR THAT ENOUGH TROOPS WILL NOT BE LEFT BEHIND AFTER THE INITIAL OPERATIONS TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE SECURITY THROUGHOUT THE DEPARTMENT. HE SAID HE PLANS TO SOLVE PART OF THIS PROBLEM BY ARMING MORE CIVIL DEFENSE TROOPS (THERE ARE NOW ONLY 165 IN THE DEPARTMENT) WITH SOME 400 AUTOMATIC WEAPONS HE HAS SQUIRRELED AWAY. INFANTOZZI SAID THAT A MONTH AGO MOST PLANTERS HAD BEEN VERY PESSIMISTIC DUE TO THE SECURITY SITUATION. SURPRISINGLY, ALL THREE OFFICIALS WERE QUITE UP-BEAT ABOUT THE COTTON SITUATION. HOWEVER, THE SITUATION HAS CHANGED, DUE TO ENCOURAGEMENT GENERATED BY OPERATION MAQUILISHUAT, PROMISES OF SECURITY MADE BY LT COL. VASCONCELOS IN A RECENT MEETING WITH PLANTERS, AND REDUCED INTEREST RATES.

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INFANTOZZI ESTIMATED THAT 80 PER CENT OF THE PLANTERS ARE NOW PREPARING THEIR LAND, WHICH MUST BE PLANTED BY NO LATER THAN MID JULY. (POLOFF OBSERVED EXTENSIVE PREPARATION OF FIELDS FROM THE AIRPLANE.) RETURNING TO MILITARY SUBJECTS, VASCONCELOS NOTED THAT HIS DETACHMENT OF WELL OVER 1,000 TROOPS HAS ONLY SUFFERED 2 DEAD AND SIX WOUNDED IN THE LAST THREE MONTHS. HE COULD NOT ESTIMATE GUERRILLA CASUALTIES. HE SAID HE HAS CAPTURED NO PRISONERS, AND NO ONE HAS TURNED THEMSELVES IN UNDER THE AMNESTY PROGRAM. LASTLY, VASCONCELOS LAUNCHED INTO A CONVOLUTED AND HIGHLY DOUBTFUL EXPLANATION OF THE MASSACRE OF EIGHT PERSONS IN NEARBY SANTA ELENA IN NOVEMBER 1982. BASICALLY, HE SAID THE GUERRILLAS HAD PERPETRATED THE CRIME AND THEN TELEPHONED THE CUARTEL AND REPORTED THAT THE TOWN HAD BEEN TAKEN OVER BY GUERRILLAS, HOPING (CORRECTLY) THAT THE ARMY WOULD REACT IMMEDIATELY AND THAT THE TROOPS' ARRIVAL ON THE SCENE WOULD LEAD PEOPLE TO BELIEVE THAT THE ARMY HAD COMMITTED THE MURDERS. (EMBASSY NOTE: THE MASSACRE WAS INVESTIGATED IN NOVEMBER BY DATT AND POLCOUNS, WHO WERE CONVINCED THAT THE ARMY WAS RESPONSIBLE.) INFANTOZZI CLOSED THE MEETING WITH SOME REMARKS TO POLOFF ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT'S INFRASTRUCTURE: THE RECENT TAX INCREASE IS ALLEVIATING SOME OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT'S FINANCIAL PROBLEMS; ONLY FIVE OF EIGHTEEN MEDICAL DOCTOR POSITIONS IN THE LOCAL

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HOSPITAL ARE FILLED; AND BUSES RUN SPORADICALLY, BUT FAIRLY FREQUENTLY, THROUGHOUT MOST OF THE DEPARTMENT. INFANTOZZI SAID THE GUERRILLAS HAVE WELL DEVELOPED LINES OF COMMUNICATION TO ADVISE TRUCKERS, BUSES AND LOCAL MOTORISTS WHEN THEY CAN AND CANNOT USE THE ROADS. THE DELEGATION THEN FLEW TO BERLIN, WHERE THEY OBSERVED USAID EMPLOYMENT GENERATION, SHELTER, AND VACCINATION PROJECTS FOR THE CITY'S 6000 DISPLACED PERSONS, AND SPOKE WITH LOCAL OFFICIALS. THE COMMANDER OF THE 85 MAN NATIONAL POLICE CONTINGENT, THE ONLY MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE CITY, SAID HE HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OF OPERATION MAQUILISHUAT. HE ALSO SAID NO ONE HAD TURNED THEMSELVES IN UNDER THE AMNESTY PROGRAM. HE HAD, HOWEVER, RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO HANDLE AMNESTY BENEFICIARIES. A MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEE TOLD DAS MATTHEWS THAT BOTH THE GUERRILLAS AND THE ARMY HAD BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE BURNING AND DESTRUCTION OF BUILDINGS WHEN THE GUERRILLAS TOOK OVER THE CITY A FEW MONTHS AGO. HE SAID AIR FORCE BOMBING WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATHS OF FIVE CIVILIANS.

ILOPANGO WOMEN'S PRISON: THE DELEGATION VISITED THE WOMEN'S PRISON AND SPOKE WITH BOTH POLITICAL AND COMMON PRISONERS. SPOKESWOMEN SAID THAT 58 OF THE FORMER 92 POLITICAL PRISONERS HAD BEEN RELEASED UNDER THE AMNESTY PROGRAM. OF THE REMAINING 34, ONLY 10 HAD BEEN IMPRISONED FOR MORE THAN SIX MONTHS. NONE KNEW THE STATUS OF THEIR CASES UNDER DECREE 507. THERE WERE SEVERAL MINORS AMONG THE PRISONERS, THE YOUNGEST OF WHICH IS 14. SEVERAL SMALL CHILDREN ALSO LIVE IN THE PRISON WITH THEIR MOTHERS, AND ONE CHILD HAD RECENTLY BEEN BORN THERE. POLITICAL PRISONERS SAID THAT THEY ARE ALLOWED A FEW MORE PRIVILEGES THAN COMMON CRIMINALS BECAUSE THEY ARE MORE DISCIPLINED. FOR EXAMPLE, THEY ARE ALLOWED MORE TIME

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OUTSIDE THEIR DORMITORIES, AND ARE ALLOWED TO MAINTAIN A SMALL HEALTH STATION FOR EMERGENCIES AT NIGHT. THE GROUP VISITED THE PRISONERS' DORMITORIES AND FOUND CONDITIONS TO BE QUITE GOOD. MOST PRISONERS SAID THEY HAD BEEN SUBJECT TO SOME TYPE OF TORTURE BEFORE BEING REMANDED TO THE PRISON. COMMON CRIMINALS SAID THEY ALSO NEED THE ATTENTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS BECAUSE THEY LIVE UNDER CONDITIONS HARSHER THAN THOSE OF THE POLITICAL PRISONERS. BLEAKLEY

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