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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3635

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E.O. 12356: N/A
TAGS: PHUM, ES
SUBJECT: CONGRESSIONAL INQUIRY: JOURNALISTS DETAINED IN
- ARCATAO

TO:

THE HONORABLE
LES AUCOIN
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Oscar Olson, Senior Reviewer

DEAR MR. AUCOIN:

- THANK YOU FOR YOUR INQUIRY ABOUT THE DETENTION OF
THREE JOURNALISTS IN ARCATAO, CHALATENANGO DEPARTMENT.
OUR INFORMATION IN THIS CASE IS AS FOLLOWS.

- THE THREE JOURNALISTS HAD OBTAINED THE ARMED
FORCES' PERMISSION TO TRAVEL IN NORTHERN CHALATENANGO
DEPARTMENT, IN AN AREA WHERE NO MILITARY OPERATIONS WERE
UNDERWAY. AFTER ARRIVING IN THE AREA TO WHICH THEY HAD
AUTHORIZATION TO TRAVEL, THEY APPARENTLY LEFT THAT AREA
AND WERE SUBSEQUENTLY FOUND IN THE COMPANY OF ARMED
GUERRILLAS IN ARCATAO ON APRIL 8, 1986, AT THE START OF
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A ONE-DAY MILITARY OPERATION IN AND AROUND THE TOWN.
THE GUERRILLAS FLED THE AREA UNDER FIRE, AND THE ARMY
REMOVED THE REPORTERS BY HELICOPTER FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY
TO CHALATENANGO CITY. THE ARMED FORCES DETAINED THE
THREE FOR ABOUT TEN HOURS BECAUSE THEY HAD BEEN FOUND IN
THE COMPANY OF ARMED GUERRILLAS IN A LOCATION OTHER THAN
THAT TO WHICH THEY HAD SAID THEY WERE GOING.

- THEIR NOTES WERE PHOTOCOPIED AND HANDED BACK TO
THEM; THE CASSETTE TAPES WERE TRANSCRIBED AND THE TAPES

RETURNED. THE FILM WAS RETAINED AND MS. JUANA ANDERSON RECEIVED REPLACEMENT FILM. CONSIDERING THAT THE JOURNALISTS WERE WELL AWARE OF, AND KNOWINGLY VIOLATED, THE ESTABLISHED RULES GOVERNING THEIR WORK IN CONFLICTIVE AREAS, THE EMBASSY DOES NOT FEEL IT WOULD BE ON SOLID GROUND IN PRESSING FOR THE RETURN OF THE FILM AND COPIES OF NOTES.

- I HOPE THAT THIS INFORMATION IS HELPFUL TO YOU.

- SINCERELY,

- EDWIN G. CORR
- AMBASSADOR

CORR

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