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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5371

RELEASE IN FULL

UNCLAS SAN SALVADOR 01205

H PASS

E.O. 12356: N/A
TAGS: PHUM, ELAB, ES
SUBJECT: CONGRESSIONAL INQUIRY: BOMBING INCIDENTS

TO: THE HONORABLE PAUL S. SARBANES
- UNITED STATES SENATE
- WASHINGTON DC 20510

DEAR SENATOR SARBANES:

THANK YOU FOR YOUR LETTER OF DECEMBER 29, 1989 IN WHICH YOU NOTE YOUR CONSTITUENTS' CONCERN OVER TWO BOMBING INCIDENTS WHICH TOOK PLACE IN SAN SALVADOR ON OCTOBER 31, AND THEIR ADDITIONAL CONCERN THAT US MILITARY ADVISERS HAVE PARTICIPATED IN DEATH SQUAD ACTIVITIES.

LET ME FIRST ASSURE YOU THAT THE LATTER ALLEGATION IS COMPLETELY UNFOUNDED; AND I FRANKLY DOUBT THAT YOUR CONSTITUENTS HAVE SEEN CREDIBLE REPORTS OF THAT NATURE.

CLEARLY, HOWEVER, ISOLATED ELEMENTS OF GOVERNMENT SECURITY FORCES HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN ILLEGAL
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ACTIVITIES, THE MOST NOTORIOUS EXAMPLE OF WHICH IS THE NOVEMBER 16 KILLING OF SIX JESUIT PRIESTS AND TWO FEMALE HOUSEHOLD EMPLOYEES ON THE CAMPUS OF THE CENTRAL AMERICAN UNIVERSITY. PRESIDENT CRISTIANI IMMEDIATELY CALLED FOR A PROMPT AND COMPLETE INVESTIGATION OF THE TRAGEDY, PROMISING TO PROSECUTE THE KILLERS, NO MATTER WHO THEY WERE. HE HAS FULFILLED THIS PROMISE, AND ON JANUARY 19 EIGHT MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY, INCLUDING A COLONEL, APPEARED BEFORE A JUDGE AND WERE CHARGED WITH THE EXECUTIONS. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME AN OFFICER WITH THE RANK OF COLONEL HAS BEEN BROUGHT BEFORE A COURT ON THESE CHARGES. AT THE REQUEST OF THE SALVADORAN

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Janina Slattery, Senior Reviewer

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THE TWO BOMBING INCIDENTS RAISED BY YOUR CONSTITUENTS WERE PART OF A SERIES OF ATTACKS PERPETRATED AGAINST BOTH OPPOSITION AND GOVERNMENT TARGETS DURING THE LAST MONTHS OF 1989. IN THE CASE OF THE COMADRES BOMBING, TWO STICKS OF DYNAMITE WERE REPORTEDLY THROWN AT THE BUILDING IN THE EARLY MORNING HOURS OF OCTOBER 31, RESULTING IN A GREAT DEAL OF BROKEN GLASS BUT VERY LITTLE DAMAGE TO THE BUILDING STRUCTURE. SEVERAL PEOPLE APPARENTLY SLEEPING INSIDE THE BUILDING WERE CUT BY SPRAYING GLASS. NO WITNESSES HAVE COME FORWARD IN THE CASE, AND WE UNDERSTAND THERE WAS INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE AT THE CRIME SCENE TO ALLOW INVESTIGATORS TO IDENTIFY THE PERPETRATORS.

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PRESIDENT CRISTIANI DEPLORED BOTH INCIDENTS IN A NATIONALLY TELEVISED ADDRESS LATE OCTOBER 31, NOTING THAT THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT IN ANY WAY SUPPORT SUCH ACTS OF VIOLENCE. HE PROMISED A FULL INVESTIGATION, AND OFFERED TO FORM A NON-PARTISAN COMMITTEE TO OVERSEE THE INVESTIGATION, EXTENDING AN INVITATION TO FENASTRAS TO FORM PART OF THE COMMITTEE. FENASTRAS DECLINED, REFUSING EVEN TO RELEASE THE BODIES OF SOME OF THOSE KILLED IN THE EXPLOSION TO AUTHORITIES FOR AUTOPSY. INSTEAD, THEY HELD A TWO-DAY WAKE FOR THE DEAD AT THE SITE OF THE BOMBING. FUNERAL SERVICES FOR THOSE KILLED TOOK PLACE WITHOUT INCIDENT ON NOVEMBER 2.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERAMERICAN AFFAIRS BERNARD ARONSON MET WITH FENASTRAS REPRESENTATIVES IN EL SALVADOR ON NOVEMBER 6, AND

URGED THEM TO COOPERATE WITH A GOVERNMENT

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INVESTIGATIVE TEAM, INCLUDING THE TWO US EXPERTS, WERE FINALLY GRANTED ACCESS TO THE SITE ON NOVEMBER 8, 1989, MORE THAN A WEEK AFTER THE BLAST. BY THAT TIME, HOWEVER, MOST OF THE DEBRIS FROM THE EXPLOSION HAD BEEN REMOVED FROM THE SITE BY FENASTRAS MEMBERS, COMPLICATING THE EFFORTS OF INVESTIGATORS.

ON NOVEMBER 11, THE FMLN INITIATED ITS "FINAL OFFENSIVE" IN EL SALVADOR AND OTHER MUNICIPALITIES, INFLECTING HUNDREDS OF DEATHS, AND WOUNDING OR DISPLACING THOUSANDS OF CITIZENS. THE ATTACK STYMIED INVESTIGATIONS INTO BOTH BOMBING INCIDENTS, AS GOVERNMENT EFFORTS WERE CONCENTRATED ON DEFENDING SALVADORAN CITIZENS. AS FAR AS WE ARE AWARE, NO SUSPECTS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED IN EITHER CASE. MEDIA REPORTS CLAIM A CAPTURED GUERRILLA TOOK CREDIT FOR PLANNING THE FENASTRAS BOMBING AS WELL AS SEVERAL OTHER TERRORIST ATTACKS WHICH TOOK PLACE PRIOR TO THE OFFENSIVE.

I AND MEMBERS OF THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION HAVE DEPLORED THE ACTS OF VIOLENCE OCCURRING IN EL SALVADOR, AND HAVE STRESSED ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT AND THE MILITARY THE IMPORTANCE OF OBSERVING HUMAN RIGHTS. BUT RECRIMINATIONS NEED TO BE MADE AGAINST THE FMLN AS WELL, WHICH HAS CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR ASSASSINATIONS OF POLITICAL FIGURES, AND RECENTLY LAUNCHED AN UNPROVOKED OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE PEOPLE OF EL SALVADOR AFTER FIRST BREAKING OFF PEACE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT. THE LOGISITICAL SOPHISTICATION OF THE FMLN OFFENSIVE INDICATES THAT PLANNING FOR THE ATTACKS WAS WELL UNDERWAY EVEN AS THE FMLN PROFESSED
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IN A SITUATION AS COMPLEX AND HIGHLY-CHARGED AS THE ONE IN EL SALVADOR, IT IS IMPORTANT TO TRY TO DEFINE THE FACTS BEFORE MAKING ALLEGATIONS, AND TO PURSUE JUSTICE ONCE THE FACTS ARE KNOWN. I BELIEVE PRESIDENT CRISTIANI IS SINCERE IN HIS EFFORTS TO DO BOTH, AND I ALSO BELIEVE THAT US ASSISTANCE WILL BE ABLE TO SUPPORT HIS EFFORTS TO HALT THE ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE IN EL SALVADOR.

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WILLIAM G. WALKER
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SAN SALVADOR 01205

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