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ACTION ARA-15

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 MCT-02 SY-05 SYE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 IO-14 HA-05 AID-05 OPR-02
/102 W

-----060469 241258Z /41

R 212000Z JUN 79
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3119
INFO AMEMBSSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
USCINCSO QUARRYHEIGHTS, CZ

RELEASED IN FULL

DECONTROLLED

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SAN SALVADOR 3429

ROME FOR VATICAN OFFICE

E.O. 12065: NA
TAGS: ASEC, PINR, PINS, PINT, SHUM, ES, VT
SUBJECT: PRIEST ASSASSINATED

REF: SAN SALVDOR 3381

1. AT APPROXIMATELY 0745 HOURS ON JUNE 20 IN SANTA TECLA
NEAR EL CALVARIO CHURCH, 42-YEAR OLD FATHER RAFAEL PALACIOS
CAMPOS WAS SHOT AND KILLED BY FOUR ASSAILANTS. PALACIOS
WAS REPORTEDLY CROSSING A STREET ON WAY TO HIS OWN CAR
AFTER VISITING HIS SISTER. PALACIOS WAS PRIEST IN LAS
DELICIAS CHURCH IN MEJICANOS, ONE OF SUBURBS OF SAN SALVADOR.
ACCORDING TO ONE RADIO REPORT, PALACIOS HAD BEEN RECEIVING
DEATH THREATS FOR SOME TIME AND HAD THAT VERY MORNING FOUND
"WHITE HAND" STENCILED ON WALLS OF HIS HOUSE. JUNE 20 EDITION
OF OPPOSITION NEWSPAPER "LA CRONICA DEL PUEBLO"
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CLAIMED THAT PALACIOS HAD RECEIVED THREATS FROM EXTREME
RIGHTIST TERRORIST ORGANIZATION WHITE WARRIORS' UNION
(UGB) THREE DAYS PRIOR TO HIS DEATH.

2. PALACIOS' BODY WAS TRANSFERRED TO MORGUE IN SAN
SALVADOR WHERE ARCHBISHOP ROMERO HIMSELF APPEARED TO
AWAIT BODY AND IN STATEMENTS TO PRESS SAID THAT PALACIOS
HAD TAKEN OVER PARISH IN MEJICANOS AFTER DEATH OF
FATHER OCTAVIO ORTIZ, KILLED AS RESULT OF RAID BY
SECURITY FORCES ON CATHOLIC RETREAT "EL DESPERTAR"

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Adolph Eisner, Senior Reviewer

IN SAN ANTONIO ABAD LAST JANUARY 20.

3. COMMENT: THERE HAS BEEN SPECULATION THAT FATHER PALACIOS MAY HAVE BEEN ASSASSINATED BY EXTREME RIGHTIST ELEMENTS IN RETALIATION FOR SHOOTING DEATH OF MAJOR DE PAS ON JUN 19 (REFTEL). WITH RESPECT TO MAJOR DE PAS, JUNE 19 EDITION OF OPPOSITION NEWSPAPER "LA CRONICA DEL PUEBLO" REPORTED THAT DE PAZ WAS "HIGH LEVEL OFFICIAL" IN ORDEN. AN EMBASSY CONTACT STATED SAME THING. WITH REGARD TO PALACIOS HIMSELF, IT IS UNCLEAR WHAT ACTIVITIES -- IF ANY -- ON HIS PART MIGHT HAVE DRAWN ATTENTION TO HIM BY EXTREME RIGHTIST TERRORISTS. HOWEVER, HE DID HAVE REPUTATION OF BEING ONE OF MORE "PROGRESSIVE" PRIESTS IN CATHOLIC CHURCH.
DEVINE

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