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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

15 February 1980

MEMORANDUM

Rightist Terrorism in El Salvador

Fearing that the governing junta will be unable to prevent a takeover by the revolutionary left, rightists in El Salvador are stepping up violent actions. Their goal is to retaliate against the left and to encourage a rightwing coup. Although our information on vigilante groups is sketchy--partly reflecting their history of fading in and out of existence--the involvement of security force personnel and members of the economic elite is widely accepted

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The principal rightist paramilitary organization, the White Warriors' Union (UGB), was formed in 1977. It focused its initial activities on the clergy, claiming responsibility for murdering a Jesuit priest in mid-1977 and threatening to kill all remaining Jesuits if they did not leave El Salvador by year's end. Last year, the organization killed another priest, and it probably was involved in dozens of additional--but unattributed--murders of teachers, peasants, and leftist activists. The UGB published a communique last month threatening further action against the left.

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This memorandum was prepared by the Latin America Division of the Office of Political Analysis. The memorandum was requested by the Latin American representative of the National Security Council. It was coordinated with the Deputy Directorate of Operations and discussed with the National Intelligence Officer for Latin America. Information received through 14 February 1980 has been used in this report. Questions and comments may be addressed to Chief, Middle America and Caribbean Branch,

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In the past, suspicion of government involvement with the terrorist right was prompted by ex-President Romero's reluctance to speak out or crack down against the UGB.

[redacted] some corroboration on links between the extremist right, the government, and the Salvadoran oligarchy. [redacted]

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[redacted] the UGB was controlled by unspecified ranking members of the Romero regime. In August, [redacted] two middle-grade National Guard officers were directing the terrorist activities.

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A new group--the Organization for Liberation from Communism (OLC)--which announced its formation last month and took credit for two bombings, may be linked to the former head of the Guard, who is known for his ultraconservative views. The OLC may have been responsible for killing a leader of a prominent leftist party that withdrew from the government in January. An active-duty National Guard officer reportedly led the team responsible for one of the recent bombings. [redacted]

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Hardliners in the economic elite probably have provided personnel, funds, equipment, and organizing ability to the rightist cause. [redacted] a wealthy rancher had used his airplane to bring a large quantity of arms into the country, that a group of oligarchs intended to finance a terrorist campaign, and that members of the group had solicited support from rightwing leaders in Guatemala. [redacted]

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[redacted] some terrorist acts were carried out by persons in the private sector who were frustrated at the erosion of public order. [redacted]

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