

[REDACTED]

15 March 1990

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: El Salvador: Update on Jesuit Killings, #4

1. The investigation of the Jesuit killings slowed in recent weeks, with Judge Zamora and the prosecutors not aggressively collecting and evaluating evidence against the nine suspects. [REDACTED] indicates that Zamora was reluctant to petition the Honor Commission for its findings or the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) Chief Colonel Rivas for information relevant to the case, including an alleged diary or notebook kept by Colonel Benavides.* Although Zamora has complained [REDACTED] that the police are not bringing forward potential witnesses, he apparently has not protested to the police director, stating instead that the Army already is aware of the problem and should resolve it. Last week, President Cristiani--at the urging of [REDACTED]--called Zamora, provided him with the names of the Honor Commission members, and told him to move quickly. Subsequently, Zamora formally requested Benavides's notebook from the military and the records of the Honor Commission's meetings. [REDACTED], Zamora continues to take testimony from three to four of some 180 potential witnesses daily. [REDACTED]

2. Meanwhile, rumors concerning the case continue to circulate. Regarding the widely published allegation that Colonel Benavides is receiving special privileges, [REDACTED] received a phone call from a woman identifying herself as the Colonel's wife who denied that her husband had visited a beach resort owned by the military pension fund. While acknowledging that Benavides receives visitors, she categorically stated that he has not left his place of detention and blamed [REDACTED] for disseminating the rumors. [REDACTED] admits the rumors of Benavides's beach trip remain unconfirmed. On 9 March, Judge Zamora denied press rumors that an assassination attempt had been made against him. [REDACTED]

* Zamora privately told [REDACTED] that he had not asked for Benavides's diary because he believed it would exonerate the Colonel, who has been charged with ordering the killings. [REDACTED]

Approved for Release
Date MAY 1994

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3. In another unconfirmed rumor, [REDACTED] last week that the ninth suspect in the Jesuit case--an enlisted man who deserted immediately after the killings--will surface soon in Mexico, where he will admit to his involvement and possibly implicate more senior officers. The suspect is expected to allege that during the operation he heard Lieutenant Espinoza--who is accused of issuing the order to shoot--talk repeatedly by radio with Vice Minister of Defense Colonel Zepeda. [REDACTED]