

# May I Speak Freely?

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**To:** Members, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence

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**Re:** Hearing on John D. Negroponte's Nomination for Director of National Intelligence and Questions Regarding His Human Rights Record

Dear Committee members,

As Director of National Intelligence, John D. Negroponte will be responsible for overseeing the nation's vast intelligence-gathering apparatus and providing the President with sound, dependable intelligence in order to fortify our national security. As the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence holds hearings to confirm him to be the first Director of National Intelligence, you and your fellow senators must address critical questions about Negroponte's credibility with regard to his record on human and civil rights abuses in Honduras and inconsistencies between his testimony and the facts, even as they were known between 1981 and 1985.

A body of evidence supports allegations that Negroponte, while serving as U.S. ambassador to Honduras, condoned or covered up egregious human rights violations committed by Honduran security forces and ignored definitive intelligence on abuses. The failure to report these violations undermined one of the embassy's critical obligations: to inform Congress of events that might bear on foreign aid and policy decision-making. In the U.S. Embassy's annual reports on human rights practices in Honduras, federally mandated for all countries receiving U.S. foreign assistance, it failed to include information on cases on abduction, illegal detention and torture, which clearly indicated a pattern of human rights abuses. Further, Negroponte and other high-level embassy officials allegedly encouraged their subordinates to refrain from reporting on rights abuses. (See Appendix Four.)

The U.S. Foreign Assistance Act prohibits military aid to any government that "engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights." Thus the Embassy's failure to report on abuses cleared the way for increases in military aid, which shot up astronomically — from \$3.9 million in 1980 to \$77.4 million in 1984.

Negroponte's failure to act on knowledge of abuses also contributed to a climate of tolerance that allowed several ELACH, FUSEP and Battalion 3-16 members to live with impunity and to maintain power in the Honduran government and security forces, even to this day. Negroponte knew — or should have known — that Honduran military officers had committed abuses and would likely commit more, and that the Honduran military wasn't taking adequate measures to prevent abuses or punish the perpetrators (Negroponte testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2001 that some military actors who "abused authority" had been disciplined, but MISF has not found that anyone responsible had been successfully prosecuted or disciplined). In fact, there is ample testimony to the contrary — that torture, illegal disappearance and extra-judicial execution were encouraged by commanders. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights, in a 1986 ruling, determined that Honduran officials had carried out or tolerated a systematic practice of disappearance in the country from 1981 to 1984.

If Negroponte did not, and still does not, believe that human rights abuses were a result of Honduran government policy, despite all of the evidence that exists, it suggests serious incompetence with regard to his reading of facts.

***\*\*Please refer to the section Critical Questions on Negroponte's Record in Honduras on page 6 of this memo.***

**Background: Negroponte Knew or Should Have Known About Government-Sanctioned Human Rights Abuses – What He Said Then and What He's Saying Now**

During John Negroponte's tenure in Honduras, the United States used the country as a base of operations for supporting the Contra war in Nicaragua, counterinsurgency efforts in El Salvador, and the larger battle against Communism in Central America. In the name of "national security," Honduran security forces — including members of the CIA-trained military intelligence Battalion 3-16 — committed serious human rights abuses against civilians who were alleged subversives. These violations of international law included kidnapping, torture and murder.

The following facts suggest that Negroponte knew or should have known about human rights abuses in Honduras during his tenure as ambassador:

- Negroponte's predecessor in Honduras, Jack Binns, apparently was well aware that state-sponsored abuses were taking place and reported his concerns to Washington. In June 1981, Binns cabled Washington saying, "I am deeply concerned at increasing evidence of officially sponsored/sanctioned assassinations of political and criminal targets, which clearly indicate GOH [government of Honduras] repression has built up a head of steam much faster than we had anticipated. Binns also wrote: "I have already asked [CIA] chief of station to raise this problem obliquely with ... [Honduran Armed Forces Commander-in-Chief] Alvarez (whose minions appear to be the principal actors and whom I suspect is the intellectual force behind this new strategy for handling subversives/criminals)." A briefing book that Binns' embassy staff prepared for Negroponte prior to his assumption of the ambassador post in November 1981 stated that the "GOH security forces have begun to resort to extralegal tactics — disappearances and, apparently, physical eliminations — to control a perceived subversive threat." (Both the State Department and Embassy (Master) copies of this briefing book were destroyed and are therefore unavailable.)
- Relatives of the disappeared filed habeas corpus petitions with the Honduran courts. These include petitions in 1981, on behalf of Tomas Nativi; 1981/1982, on behalf of Manfredo Velasquez; July 1982, on behalf of Oscar Alexis Colindres Campos; August 1982 and April 1984, on behalf of José Eduardo Becerra Lanza; September 1982, on behalf of Jorge Israel Zavala Eurake; March 1984, on behalf of Gustavo Adolfo Morales Funez; and March 1984, on behalf of Rolando Vindel González (Source: "The Facts Speak for Themselves," the National Commissioner for the Protection of Human Rights in Honduras, 1994, and "Disappearances in Honduras: A Wall of Silence and Indifference," Amnesty International, 1992).
- The Honduran press published hundreds of reports of illegal detentions, abductions and disappearances. According to The Baltimore Sun, in 1982 alone, newspapers published at least 318 stories about military abuses. Families took out full-page ads showing pictures of missing people and conducted protests and vigils in Tegucigalpa.
- Relatives of the disappeared appealed to the U.S. Embassy for help. In one instance, in October 1983, COFADEH members including Bertha Oliva and Zenaida Velasquez (whose husband and brother, respectively, had been abducted and disappeared) visited the Embassy and explained their efforts to determine the whereabouts of their family members. Their allegations that the armed forces had abducted their loved ones were dismissed.
- Sister Laetitia Bordes came to Negroponte in May 1982 for help in determining the fate of 32 Salvadoran refugees (including the secretary of the assassinated Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero) who, according to eyewitnesses, had been forcibly abducted several months after arriving in Honduras and were never seen again. Bordes says Negroponte informed her that the U.S. Embassy didn't interfere in the affairs of the Honduran government, and that he had no idea what had happened to the women.

- The U.S. Embassy actually intervened to help obtain the release of three abduction and torture victims, Oscar and Gloria Reyes and Ines Murillo, in 1982 and 1983 — most likely because these abductions had sparked prominent protests and attracted international attention that reflected unfavorably on Honduras.
- In June 1982 Col. Leonidas Torres Arias, after being ousted as intelligence chief for the Honduran armed forces, held a press conference in Mexico City about “a death squad operating in Honduras that was being led by armed forces chief, General Gustavo Alvarez,” a man with whom Negroponce was in close contact.
- Honduran Congressman Efrain Diaz Arrivillaga says he spoke to Negroponce about his concern over the military's abuses.

Despite the cacophony of publicity and protests against forced disappearances, the Embassy's annual human rights reports were strangely silent, and the ambassador consistently denied — both to Congress and in the international press — that officially sanctioned abuses were taking place. In 1982, in response to an article published in *The Economist*, he stated unequivocally, “It is simply untrue to state that death squads have made their appearance in Honduras.”

In the years since Negroponce was in Honduras, former Battalion 3-16 officers have explicitly described torture conducted by the Honduran military and testified that it was a method of interrogation that Gen. Alvarez promoted. José Barrera Martínez, who served as an interrogator and assassin for Battalion 3-16 and later sought political asylum in Canada, gave detailed descriptions of his involvement in the battalion, admitting that he had electrocuted victims' genitals, suffocated people with rubber hoods, and tore off a man's testicles with a rope. In a 1996 interview with *The Baltimore Sun*, he said he was trained by the CIA and Argentines in Honduras and an unknown location in the United States. He said that although the CIA discouraged the use of torture, the agency knew that the Hondurans used torture as a method of interrogation. Florencio Calallero, a Battalion 3-16 interrogator who had been trained by the CIA, also testified to the battalion's regular involvement in torture and illegal detentions, as well as methods of execution such as throwing detainees out of airplanes.

The testimony of a number of Hondurans who were fortunate enough to survive the ordeal of clandestine detention confirms that Battalion 3-16 used brutal methods against its captives, including vicious beatings, electric shocks, dunking in barrels of water, and rape. One surviving victim, Ines Murillo, was able to confirm not only the involvement of specific Honduran military officers in a system of illegal detention, interrogation, torture and murder, but also the participation of U.S. personnel. (See Case Studies and “Testifying to Torture,” Appendix Three).

However, Negroponce has continued to maintain that there were no death squads operating in Honduras and that there was no government policy of abuse. In the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing to consider his nomination for the position of U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, he stood by his 1982 statement: “I responded to *The Economist* ... in good faith and to this day, I did not believe that death squads were operating.” He further stated, “I did not believe then, nor do I believe now that these abuses were part of a deliberate government policy.”

His statements patently disregard a 1988 judgment by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, which ruled that Honduran officials had carried out or tolerated a systematic practice of disappearance in the country from 1981 to 1984 that resulted in the disappearance of 100 to 150 people. The court found that “those disappearances followed a similar pattern, beginning with the kidnapping of the victims by force, often in broad daylight and in public places, by armed men in civilian clothes and disguises, who acted with apparent impunity and who used vehicles without any official identification, with tinted windows and with false license plates or no plates.” The victims “were usually persons whom Honduran officials considered dangerous to State security” and who “had usually been under surveillance for long periods of time, ... the arms employed

were reserved for the official use of the military and police, and the vehicles used had tinted glass, which requires special official authorization."

In the 2001 Senate hearing, Negroponte skillfully sidestepped questioning on the "death squad" issue by reducing it to a matter of semantics: "So I was asked, well then, what do you mean by "death squad," because after all maybe different people carry with them different definitions of what they consider a death squad. I believed at the time that a death squad—I thought of what was going on in El Salvador: paramilitary right-wing death squads. That was the prevalent activity, and that was the kind of thing we were hearing about all the time. I did not see any such activities. I did not think that any activities that were occurring in Honduras at that time fit that description."

He went on to implicitly justify human rights abuses in Honduras by comparing it to other Central American countries: "I think it is fair to say that Honduras' human rights record compared favorably with neighboring countries. If there were 100 to 150 unexplained disappearances in Honduras from 1974 to 1984, I would point out that this was the number of disappearances being reported each week during the peak of the conflict in El Salvador. My understanding is that there was a total of some 50,000 to 75,000 disappearances in El Salvador during that civil war."

He also suggested another rationalization, that overall political and security concerns justified glossing over human rights abuses: "I would urge the Committee not to lose sight of that fact that we are talking about facts and circumstances which occurred almost 20 years ago, in an atmosphere of some considerable tension and controversy both here and in Central America. The Embassy's role was to carry out a complex and multifaceted policy set by Washington. It would be a distortion of reality to judge either events in Honduras or the performance of the U.S. mission through the exclusive prism of human rights considerations ... I believe these past events must be evaluated in light of the very complex reality of that period as well as the eventually positive peaceful and democratic outcome in Central America."

Negroponte conceded that he might have taken a different line of action, but was unapologetic: "Could I have been more vocal? Well, you know, in retrospect perhaps I could have been. I do not know. But that is the way I handled it at the time."

His disregard of evidence of human rights abuses and failure to act on it calls into question his ability to provide complete and accurate intelligence information to U.S. policymakers. His denials, linguistic evasion, and unbalanced rationalization call into question his honesty and suggest he was nothing more than a yes man for a foreign policy in which the end – quashing Communism in Central America – justified the means, torture and murder. The first director of national intelligence must be a person with stronger credentials.

## Reports on Abuses Published by Human Rights Groups

During Negroponete's tenure in Honduras, human rights groups, as well as the press, published information about human rights abuses. Still that information never ended up in the embassy's human rights reports. The Baltimore Sun compared the annual human rights reports (1981-1985) with the facts as they were then known and concluded that "Congress was deliberately misled." (See Appendix Four.)

During the early 1980s, the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in Honduras (CODEH) and the Organization of the Families of the Disappeared (COFADEH) kept records of cases of the disappeared. According to CODEH, similar numbers of disappeared were made available to the embassy in the early 1980s.

### Human Rights Violations in Honduras, 1980-1984

Source: Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in Honduras (CODEH)

<i>Political assassinations</i>	<i>Permanently disappeared</i>	<i>Temporarily disappeared</i>
1980: 1	1980: 2	1980: 11
1981: 42	1981: 52	1981: 67
1982: 29	1982: 26	1982: 35
1983: 25	1983: 25	1983: 19
1984: 36	1984: 19	1984: 32

TOTAL: 421

According to a [press release](#) from the **Council on Hemispheric Affairs**, March 3, 1984:

According to various groups within Honduras, there were 25-100 disappearances in 1983; but according to the State Dept. report, 10 disappearances and 10 people who suffered "unlawful or arbitrary deprivation of life." COHA notes that the State Dept. report claimed that human rights were improving, in apparent disregard of charges made by several human rights monitoring organizations, including COHA, and that "extrajudicial actions -- political killings, arbitrary arrests and kidnappings -- were actually up in 1983."

Other U.S. NGOs such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, EPICA and Witness for Peace, among others, reported on abuses in Honduras during the early 1980s.

In subsequent years, other Honduran and U.S. sources have provided statistics on the numbers of disappeared. *The Facts Speak for Themselves*, an investigation by Honduran Human Rights Ombudsman Dr. Leo Valladares published in 1993, cites the following numbers of detained-disappeared in Honduras between 1980-1992.

1980: 1  
1981: 53  
1982: 18  
1983: 20  
1984: 18  
1985: 26  
1986: 4  
1987: 22  
1988: 12  
1992: 1  
Date unknown: 4  
Temporary detained-disappeared: 7 (6 students and Ines Murillo)\*

\*Other known detainees not included in "Facts": 2 (Nora Miselem and Dixie Urbina)

### Critical Questions on Negroponte's Record in Honduras

- Negroponte should be asked whether he believes torture is ever justified as an interrogation technique and, if so, under what circumstances.
- Does Negroponte believe that some obligations should be subordinated or sacrificed in favor of other concerns? Does he believe that his obligation to fully report the Honduran human rights situation to Congress was secondary to the political and security concerns of that time? Negroponte suggested one of many justifications for not reporting human rights abuses, that overall political and security concerns justified glossing over human rights problems: "I would urge the Committee not to lose sight of that fact that we are talking about facts and circumstances which occurred almost 20 years ago, in an atmosphere of some considerable tension and controversy both here and in Central America. The Embassy's role was to carry out a complex and multifaceted policy set by Washington. It would be a distortion of reality to judge either events in Honduras or the performance of the U.S. mission through the exclusive prism of human rights considerations. The fragility of Honduran political and governmental institutions; the security concerns; the economic and social difficulties; and the threatening regional situation were important preoccupations alongside our interest in restoring democracy and the rule of law. Just as we did not then have the luxury of pursuing one of these interests to the exclusion of all others; it would not be right now to revisit events of that period and judge them against only one of the many interests we were pursuing, indeed instructed to pursue, at the time. I believe these past events must be evaluated in light of the very complex reality of that period as well as the eventually positive peaceful and democratic outcome in Central America."
- Negroponte should be asked about his treatment of intelligence on human rights abuses, forced disappearances, and summary executions. Why did Negroponte dismiss definitive CIA intelligence in favor of General Alvarez's denials? See CIA Stipulations, Appendix One: In November of 1983, when Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Craig Johnstone wrote Negroponte voicing concern over intelligence reports of summary executions of suspected subversives, Negroponte believed Alvarez's subsequent denials and questioned the credibility of the intelligence Johnstone cited. Johnstone's concern stemmed from an October 1983 U.S. intelligence report on the execution of a group of as many as nine Central American Revolutionary Workers Party (PRTC) members in Honduras.

According to CIA Stipulations regarding a CIA Inspector General report, Negroponte "noted the conflict between the intelligence reports and General Alvarez, raised questions about the reliability of the sources upon which the reports were based, and therefore urged that the United States not pursue the specific matter further with Alvarez." Several weeks later, on November 17, 1983, the CIA sent a draft report regarding the same incident to the Embassy naming the officer who executed guerilla leader Reyes Mata and indicating that Alvarez was consulting before and after the execution. According to the CIA, the information was accurate and "could not be refuted." The CIA was then "made aware that Ambassador Negroponte was particularly sensitive on the subject set forth in the draft report and having been concerned that prior intelligence reporting on the same topic might create a human rights problem for Honduras."

According to the stipulations regarding same the CIA Inspector General's Report, "The Honduran military committed hundreds of human rights abuses since 1980, many of which were politically motivated and officially sanctioned...CIA reporting linked Honduran military personnel to "death squad" activities... Negroponte says he became aware of the two CIA Sensitive Memoranda regarding prisoner executions... After confronting Commander-in-Chief Alvarez and hearing his denials, Negroponte says he harbored doubts over the accuracy of the reports of executions and recommended that the situation be closely monitored for future developments."

- It is important that Negroponete be asked about ELACH, the Honduran Anti-Communist Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Anti-comunista de Honduras), as it operated during his tenure as ambassador. Was Negroponete aware of ELACH's existence? Of its activities? Of its links to the National Directorate of Intelligence (DNI)? If not, how might it be that the CIA had information (see Appendix One) and he did not? Why wasn't ELACH mentioned in any of the Human Rights Reports that Negroponete as Ambassador submitted to the State Department? In previous hearings for confirmation to diplomatic posts at the United Nations and in Iraq, John Negroponete has been asked about Military Intelligence Battalion 3-16 (also known as "FUSEP Special Unit", see CIA Stipulations, Appendix One) and his knowledge of its members and activities. In Honduras, "Battalion 3-16" has become a sort of shorthand for all "death squad" -like activity. Many Hondurans and international human rights activists generalize and attribute all kidnappings, disappearances and killings in Honduras in the 1980s to "Battalion 3-16" because it has gained more notoriety over the years. But ELACH also operated during Negroponete's tenure as Ambassador and engaged in torture and forced disappearances. The CIA has partially released documents that report that ELACH executed people during the 1980-1984 period (see Appendix Two) and CIA also stipulates to these facts in the congressional record (see Appendix One).
- See Appendix Two, Document One: The families of all 9 men listed in this cable are still seeking information on their fate, among them Angel Manfredo Velasquez (Zenaida Velasquez's brother), Tomas Nativi (Betha Oliva de Nativi's husband), and Eduardo Becerra Lanza (Dr. Leo Valladares' distant relative). At the time he was Ambassador, was Negroponete aware of any of these cases? Can he give the name(s) of the men who were DNI Director(s) during his tenure as Ambassador? Did he (or any other Embassy staff) have contact with the DNI Director(s)? What did this contact consist of?
- See Appendix Two, Document Two: This is a partially declassified trip report written by staff from the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) that visited Honduras. It makes reference to ELACH and to a letter written by the Director of Central Intelligence William Casey, and suggests that ELACH may have continued to operate even into 1986. Honduran Human Rights Ombudsman Dr. Leo Valladares specifically requested that the U.S. government declassify the Casey letter when he was investigating forced disappearances in that country. The letter was never declassified. The trip report notes that executions were "personally approved by the Armed Forces Commander and by the President" and quotes the DCI as expressing concern that ELACH "continues to be a viable organization and has high level contacts in the government." Perhaps the current SSCI staff could request and look at the unredacted version of the trip report and any notes staffers took in 1986, as well as the Casey letter. They might also talk to the staffers who went on the trip in 1986.
- See Appendix Two, Document Three: This cable indicates that the FUSEP had a Special Unit that provided technical support to the Arms Interdiction Program (material passed from Nicaragua through Honduras to the guerrillas in El Salvador), and that the DNI had a Secret Unit (ELACH). It reports interaction between the Special Unit and the Secret Unit. Negroponete is on the record on a CNN Cold War History interview about the arms interdiction program which he viewed as successful. Did the U.S. provide training, advising, etc. to the Special Unit that was involved in arms interdiction? Was Negroponete aware of its ties to a death squad (i.e. ELACH)? If not, why not?

## Select Case Histories

In the 1980s the Honduran military, namely the secret intelligence unit Battalion 3-16, detained scores of political activists, including teachers, students, church workers, unionists and suspected guerrillas. Most were never seen again. Typically, the detainees were beaten, tortured and then "disappeared" — that is, executed in secret and buried in unmarked graves. In 1993 the Honduran human rights commissioner published a report entitled "Los Hechos Hablan por Si Mismos" ("The Facts Speak for Themselves"), which documented the cases of 184 men, women and children who disappeared in Honduras from 1979 to 1992, the majority in the early 1980s. Many others were detained and tortured and have survived to tell their stories. The following case histories, produced by MISF, give the accounts of some of those survivors and describe some important disappearance cases.

### Six University Students

On April 27, 1982 armed men in civilian clothes entered the shared home of six university students in a residential neighborhood of Tegucigalpa. Although they had no warrant, the men arrested the students — Milton and Marlen Irasema Jiménez Puerto, Gilda María and Ana Suyapa Rivera Sierra, and Edwin Dagoberto and Adán Guillermo López Lone — along with Rafael Rivera Torres, an assistant attorney general and the father of Gilda and Suyapa. Two neighbors, a former supreme court justice and a Liberal Party representative, attempted to convince the armed men that they couldn't arrest the students without a warrant and that Rivera Torres had judicial immunity. The neighbors were unsuccessful, and the group was taken to a police station.

Rivera Torres was released two hours later, but the six students were taken to a clandestine detention center where they were interrogated and tortured for four days. During this time, they were interrogated about university politics and the identities of student leaders. Four of the six were subsequently released, but Milton Jiménez and Adán Guillermo López were imprisoned and charged with "antisocial and totalitarian activities against the democratic and representative government of Honduras" by Maj. Juan Blas Salazar Mesa, the head of criminal investigations of the National Investigations Directorate. A criminal court judge ordered them incarcerated but released them on bail a few days later. Eighteen months later, the case was dismissed.

In mid-1995, following a much-publicized investigation into human rights violations committed by military personnel, the Honduran Special Prosecutor for Human Rights charged 10 senior army officers, including Salazar Mesa, with attempted murder and unlawful detention in connection with the "temporary disappearance" of the six students. This was the first time that the Honduran government had initiated judicial proceedings against members of the military for human rights violations.

Prosecution, however, was hampered by the scarcity of hard evidence and by the interpretation of amnesty laws enacted by the Honduran government between 1987 and 1991 as part of a so-called national reconciliation process. The laws granted unconditional amnesty for political crimes committed by both military officers and members of leftist groups during the 1980s. Defense lawyers for the accused officers argued that the laws protected them from prosecution, and an appeals court upheld this argument in 1996. The Supreme Court reversed the ruling and sent the case back to the original court to decide on the application of the amnesty laws, but no further progress was made.

In 1998 a criminal court judge ruled that Salazar Mesa — who was already serving a 21-year jail sentence on a 1995 drug-trafficking conviction — was guilty of participating in the kidnapping and torture of the students but qualified for amnesty and therefore could not be punished. The attorney general appealed, arguing that the amnesty laws were intended to apply only to political crimes, not to common crimes such as illegal detention and murder.

Finally, in 2000 the Supreme Court ruled that the amnesty laws were unconstitutional, agreeing with the prosecution's argument that the laws were too vague and should not apply to common crimes. The court ruled narrowly in its interpretation of the amnesty laws, applying it only to the case of the six students. This left open the possibility that the amnesty laws can be applied to military defendants in other cases. Although the ruling should have opened the door to judicial proceedings against the 10 officers implicated in the case, no substantive action has yet been taken.

### Oscar and Gloria Reyes

Oscar Reyes was a professor and founder of the School of Journalism at the National Autonomous University of Honduras. He and his Nicaraguan wife, Gloria, strongly opposed the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua, and they supported the Sandinista National Liberation Front during the revolutionary struggle to overthrow Somoza. Although they broke off ties when the Sandinistas became openly Marxist after taking power in 1979, the Honduran military suspected them of revolutionary activity and collaboration with a group of alleged Salvadoran leftists living next door to their home in Tegucigalpa.

On the evening of July 8, 1982, men in black masks raided the Reyes' home and bound, gagged and blindfolded the Reyes, their daughter and two employees. The others were released shortly thereafter, but Oscar and Gloria Reyes were ultimately taken to separate locations where they were interrogated, beaten and tortured with electric shocks to the genitals. After several days, they were brought to the First Criminal Court in Tegucigalpa and a judge ordered them incarcerated while charges of "attempts against state security" were investigated. The two were taken to separate jails where they were held for more than five months.

During this time, soldiers occupied the Reyes' home and stripped it of all items of value. In December 1982 Oscar Reyes' sister informed the chief of the armed forces, Gen. Alvarez Martínez, that she would go to the press with photographs of the Reyes' ransacked home and information of what the couple had suffered over the previous months. Alvarez agreed to have the Reyes released, but only if they would leave the country and keep silent about what had happened to them. On Dec. 22 the Reyes were released and given "exit only" visas, and they departed the following day to the United States, where they subsequently received political asylum.

In 1997 the Reyes filed a criminal complaint in a Honduran court against former army captain Billy Fernando Joya Amendola for his direct role in their abduction and torture, but the court refused to investigate. The Reyes, who are now U.S. citizens, are part of a current federal civil lawsuit against former Honduran military intelligence chief Lt. Col. Juan López Grijalba for his responsibility for the human rights abuses they suffered.

### Hans Albert Madisson López

On July 8, 1982, the same night that military-police forces abducted Oscar and Gloria Reyes, Hans Albert Madisson López was abducted in the vicinity of the Reyes' home and disappeared. The 24-year-old student was living in the home of relatives down the block from the Reyes. He had no known political affiliations, and some believe he had been mistaken for someone else. Several days after the abduction, a farmer in a community outside of Tegucigalpa found two bags containing the remains of a man who apparently had been tortured and decapitated. He buried the remains after informing a local judge, who formally documented the case.

In 1995 a forensic team working at the request of the Honduran Special Prosecutor for Human Rights exhumed the skeleton and identified it as Madisson's, based on dental records and a bone fracture. DNA testing later confirmed this finding, leading the Honduran government to bring murder charges against army Chief of Staff Oscar Hernández Chávez, Col. Alexander Hernández Santos, Segundo Flores Murillo and former Capt. Billy Joya Amendola, who had fled to Spain

earlier that year to evade arrest on charges related to the temporary disappearance and torture of six university students in 1982.

In 1999 a Honduran lower court found Chavez not guilty of murder. The following year, a Honduran appeals court acquitted Joya, who had returned to Honduras in 1998. The Public Ministry appealed the Joya acquittal, but in 2001 the Supreme Court affirmed the lower court decision. The defense argued successfully that a DNA test that positively identified Madisson's body was not admissible as evidence because of the probability of error. The Public Ministry is reportedly collecting evidence from a different DNA test in order to reopen the case.

### Nora Miselem

Nora Miselem worked for the Committee of Solidarity with the Peoples of Central America (COSPUCA), an organization that aided refugees from other countries fleeing civil wars and government oppression. "I don't know if we were naive, or just very radical, to use the word solidarity in the organization's name. Because to the government, and especially to the military, in those days the word solidarity had the worst sort of connotation; it was the same as communism," she said in an interview with Margaret Randall in the book, "When I Look Into the Mirror and See You."

The organization operated in refugee camps on the Honduran border with El Salvador, and Miselem made frequent trips between Tegucigalpa and the camps to transport food and supplies. The organization also worked to publish the names of Honduran soldiers accused of murdering and abusing refugees. It was dangerous work. In July 1982, after police searched her sister's house and claimed to have found a stash of arms belonging to Miselem, she decided to go to one of the camps to stay for a few months.

When Miselem arrived at the camp, Honduran soldiers at the entrance forced her to register her name. She was immediately detained and brought to a military camp in the small town of Santa Rosa de Copan. Later that night they let her go, but not for long. She left with two soldiers trailing her. Miselem tried to seek sanctuary with the local priest, but no one opened the door. Eventually, she checked into a hotel, where the soldiers spent the entire night trying to coax her out. The next morning Miselem, along with her traveling companion Narcisa López, fled to Tegucigalpa, but she was still being followed.

Once in Tegucigalpa, Miselem and López stayed in an apartment that was used by people who worked in the refugee camps. There they received a call that someone from a church wanted to see them. Because COSPUCA worked with churches, Miselem didn't think it was unusual. They made plans to meet the next morning, July 26, 1982, on a pedestrian street in downtown Tegucigalpa. But as soon as Miselem and López arrived, they realized it was a trap; the man was not from the church and the car that was to take them away was already on the pedestrian walkway. She looked for an escape. "The only thing I saw was a store window," Miselem said, "and I remember asking myself: if I throw myself against that window, will I be able to break it with my body?" Miselem and López were blindfolded, beaten and shoved into the vehicle. They were taken to a clandestine detention facility, where the two women were separated.

For the next nine days, Miselem was subjected to severe physical and psychological torture by men who allegedly were members of Battalion 3-16. She was first held in a house that served as a secret detention center. In the early 1990s, Miselem and other illegal detainees, including the six university students, were able to identify this house in Amaratéca, about 30 minutes from Tegucigalpa on the road to the Soto Cano military base. The house belonged to Gen. Amilcar Zelaya Rodríguez, who in 1995 was charged, along with nine other military officers, with the illegal detention and torture of the students. As of the end of 2003, Zelaya was under house arrest for complicity in the case. A forensic investigation conducted in 1999 found evidence that the house had been used as a torture center, including bloodstained walls, tunnels, false floors and bullets imbedded in the walls.

In that house, her torturers attached electrical wires to her breasts and vagina and repeatedly shocked her. They sexually assaulted her and threatened to sterilize her, saying she did not deserve to be a mother. They claimed to be responsible for the death of her son, who had died under mysterious circumstances in a hospital years earlier, and threatened to kill her parents as well. Miselem's torturers also threatened to kill her, holding machetes to her neck and guns to her head. They accused her of trafficking arms to Salvadoran guerrilla fighters.

Miselem was defiant and didn't allow fear to overtake her. When her captors threatened to rape her, she warned them that she wasn't on the pill and that if she became pregnant she would return to deliver her baby there. She said her ability to suppress her fear and attack the morale of her captors was a big help. "I think when you're being tortured, in the context of the relationship between the torturer and his victim, the person being tortured is able to maintain his or her dignity because we have a different morality," Miselem said. "We knew why we were fighting."

Miselem was constantly moved to different locations, including a secret jail in a house by the sea in the northern town of Puerto Cortés, which she believes was also owned by a military officer. There she was thrown together with a number of people from the apartment in Tegucigalpa, which was raided the day Miselem and López were abducted, and they were able to find some comfort in their solidarity. Miselem wasn't given any food until the day before her release, and she was kept blindfolded and often hooded for the duration of her capture. Years later she recognized the very distinctive voice of one of her interrogators as that of Gen. Luis Alonso Discua Elvir, a Battalion 3-16 commander and chief of the Honduran Armed Forces.

Miselem ultimately was moved to a regular prison, and she was released on Aug. 3, 1982. She was never formally arrested or charged. Miselem believes that pressure from her family as well as the fact that there were many witnesses to the abduction of the group from the apartment building contributed to her release and the release of the others. Miselem returned to live with her parents, but she was continuously stalked and harassed. Continuing to fear for her life, she went into exile on Aug. 15, 1982. She was followed until the moment she got on the plane for Costa Rica.

From Costa Rica, Miselem fled to Nicaragua, where she settled and married a man who was also a Honduran exile. The couple had a daughter and a son. Fearing a surge in violence when the Sandinistas lost power in 1990, they decided to leave Nicaragua. After eight years in exile, she returned to Honduras with her family. It was not an easy transition. Miselem says their phone was tapped, and she struggled to get a job. Employers knew her history and would not hire her because they feared for their own safety.

In recent years, Miselem has attempted to bring her case to court within Honduras. She has testified numerous times before the Public Ministry, an independent government body established in 1994 to investigate and prosecute criminal cases, including human rights abuses. The process has been terribly slow, hampered by Honduras' faulty judicial system and lack of resources available to investigators, and the fact that many of those involved in human rights abuses in the '80s remain in power. Judges in the case have told her she hasn't presented enough proof, even though she has provided photographs and witnesses.

Today Miselem lives in Tegucigalpa with her two children. Her husband recently died of lung cancer. She is now co-director of the Center for Women's Rights in Honduras and works on a radio program called, appropriately, "Time to Speak." Miselem believes that it is important for her country to come to terms with the repression that she herself survived, and she continues to seek justice for her case within Honduras. "So few of us survived, and I think it's the least we can do for those who didn't. We few who returned are the living proof of what happened to the others."

Angel Manfredo Velásquez Rodríguez

Angel Manfredo Velásquez Rodríguez, a 35-year-old graduate student, teacher, father of three and leader of a socialist national student union, was abducted Sept. 12, 1982 from a street in downtown Tegucigalpa. Eyewitnesses saw seven heavily armed men in civilian clothes, two of whom were identified as Sgt. José Isaías Vilorio and Lt. Flores Murillo, push Velásquez into a white Ford without license plates. Velásquez was never seen again. A few days after the abduction, members of the Velásquez family filed a habeas corpus petition and continued to pursue legal remedies in the Honduran courts in 1982, 1983 and 1984. Family members also sought aid from the U.S. Embassy, but without success.

The family also petitioned the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which deemed the case eligible for referral to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to decide if the Honduran government had violated Velásquez's rights to life, personal security and freedom. Florencio Caballero, a former Battalion 3-16 interrogator, testified before the court and gave an account of the kidnapping, as described to him by Lt. Murillo. He said they took Velásquez to INDUMIL, a military complex that served as a secret detention and interrogation center. There he was tortured and later turned over to an execution team, who took him outside Tegucigalpa, dismembered his body and buried the remains in different places.

Another witness before the court, Leopoldo Aguilar Villalobos, said he was abducted on Sept. 29, 1981 by men identifying themselves as members of the armed forces. He was blindfolded, taken to an unknown place, tortured and held in a solitary room. Through a hole in the door to an adjoining room he heard moaning and the voice of a pained man, who identified himself as Manfredo Velásquez and asked for help.

In 1988 the court condemned Honduras for failing to protect Velásquez's basic human rights and ordered the state to pay reparations to his wife and children. To date, no individuals have been successfully prosecuted in connection with Velásquez's abduction, disappearance, torture and death. However, in July 2002 Velásquez's son and sister, Zenaida Velásquez, filed a civil lawsuit in U.S. federal court against former Honduran military intelligence chief Lt. Col. Juan López Grijalba for his responsibility in the case.

Zenaida Velásquez helped found the Committee of Relatives of the Detained-Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH) in 1982 to provide support to families whose loved ones had been abducted. In 1987, after receiving several threats herself, Velásquez left Honduras and sought asylum in the United States. She is now a U.S. citizen and works as a public health educator in San Jose, Calif.

#### Inés Consuelo Murillo Schwaderer

The case of Inés Consuelo Murillo Schwaderer is significant because she was able to confirm not only the involvement of specific Honduran military officers in a system of illegal detention, interrogation, torture and murder, but also the participation of U.S. personnel during a time when U.S. officials in Honduras claimed they had no evidence that systematic human rights abuses were occurring. She also confirmed the existence and location of clandestine detention centers run by military intelligence Battalion 3-16. Her testimony before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in 1987 helped lead to the court's verdict that the Honduran Armed Forces had carried out a systematic practice of disappearance in the country during the early 1980s.

At the time of her abduction, 24-year-old Murillo was a political activist working as an adviser to peasant organizations and researching her student thesis on the recuperation of peasant lands, both considered subversive activities. She is also alleged to have been a member an armed leftist group known as the Lorenzo Zelaya Popular Revolutionary Forces. On the evening on March 13, 1983 in the city of Choloma, Murillo and her Salvadoran companion, José Gonzalo Flores Trejos, were approached by a large pick-up truck and another vehicle as they left the house of a friend. A number of armed men claiming to be immigration agents surrounded Murillo and Flores and began beating them with their weapons.

Murillo resisted arrest because the men were in civilian dress, their vehicles were civilian, and they presented no warrant. "The credential was their guns," Murillo said before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. The pair were shoved into the truck, blindfolded and bound, and driven to a private residence on the western outskirts of San Pedro Sula. Murillo and Flores were thrown into a rough basement. Murillo later identified the house after her release.

During more than a month in the basement, Murillo suffered severe physical torture. In her Inter-American Court testimony, Murillo described her experiences. "I was tied up and beaten. I was left naked most of the time and was given almost nothing to eat ... I suffered electroshocks, hanging, suffocation attempts ... They burned my legs, made cuts in my skin with needles, made me lose my sense of time and space, drugged me and sexually abused me," she said. Her torturers wanted her to confess that she was involved in guerrilla activities.

For the first 10 days of her detention, Murillo did not disclose her real name because she feared her family might be captured as well. When she finally broke under the torture, revealing her name and the names of her parents, her captors were shocked to discover they knew her father, who had been a security official for former Honduran President Ramón Villeda Morales. Murillo's captors became less harsh and even informed her they had made anonymous phone calls to let her parents know she was alive; nevertheless, she was convinced that she would not survive her detention.

After 36 days, she was transferred to a secret jail at a military complex called INDUMIL, where many other illegal detainees were housed and which was off limits to Honduran government officials and judges attempting to locate disappearance victims. Here the abuse continued, and her interrogators also employed CIA-style psychological methods. They made her stand for hours without being allowed to sleep or go to the bathroom, threw ice water on her naked body, and served her dead rats for dinner. Her cell contained a 55-gallon water tank, into which she was dunked headfirst when she refused to answer questions. During her 78 days in detention, Murillo recognized and identified two of her captors: Lt. Marco Tulio Regalado Hernandez, one of her most brutal torturers, and Sgt. Florencio Caballero, who interrogated her and perhaps participated in her torture. Both men had received CIA training in interrogation methods.

It was at INDUMIL that an American called "Mr. Mike," who made regular visits to the facility, came to her cell. Before his arrival, her cell was cleaned and she was allowed to bathe and dress. According to Florencio Caballero, who later fled Honduras and gave numerous testimonies about his experience with Batallion 3-16, "Mr. Mike" was a CIA agent who worked at the U.S. Embassy and oversaw the activities of the battalion. In 1988 Richard Stolz, then CIA deputy director for operations, confirmed in a secret testimony before the Senate Select Intelligence Committee that a CIA officer had indeed visited the location where Murillo was held. (That testimony was later partially declassified.)

A memo prepared for the CIA Inspector General's office in 1989 and partially declassified in 1997 further confirms that a CIA temporary duty officer was dispatched to help in "exploiting her questioning." He observed signs of mistreatment and "immediately ordered clean clothing and a hot meal for the two prisoners, and had the water drum removed." He reportedly continued to check on her condition whenever he visited the secret jail. Nevertheless, Murillo remained in illegal captivity and continued to be subjected to intense interrogation sessions.

No warrant was ever issued for Murillo's arrest, nor was she allowed to see a lawyer or her family. Her parents went to great lengths to obtain her release. Her mother, a German national who worked for the United Nations, sought help from German and U.N. officials, one of whom spoke with numerous ambassadors and Honduran military officers. (In a 1995 letter to the Baltimore Sun, John Negroponte, U.S. ambassador to Honduras during the time of Murillo's detention, said he personally intervened with Honduran authorities to help obtain her release.)

The Inter-American Commission of Human Rights and Amnesty International also appealed to the Honduran government.

Murillo's father spoke regularly to reporters and sought the help of government officials and diplomats, even traveling to the United States to speak with congressional aides. He had also obtained the names of Honduran officers posted at INDUMIL as well as the name of an American believed to be the CIA officer, and he wrote a letter to the Honduran foreign minister threatening to publicly reveal this information. The family then took out a full-page ad in a prominent Honduran newspaper with a photo of Murillo and the headline, "Courage, my daughter." The public outcry and political pressure were finally enough. A few days later, on May 31, 1983, Murillo and Flores were released from INDUMIL and taken to a public jail. The National Investigations Directorate of the Public Security Forces claimed responsibility for their capture, most likely in order to preserve the secrecy of Battalion 3-16.

Murillo and Flores were brought before a Honduran court on false charges that included robbery and arms possession. Although they testified to the torture they had endured, they were found guilty of treason and attempting to overthrow the government. They were sentenced to two years in jail, but Murillo was released after 13 months, with the help of the German government. She was informed that her release was contingent on three conditions: that she would not speak of the political situation in Honduras, that she would not talk about what happened to her while in detention, and that she would promptly leave the country. Murillo has refused to follow the first two terms. "No one can demand that in exchange for my freedom, I cannot talk about my country," she said before the Inter-American Court.

Murillo testified before the Costa Rica-based court in support of the case of the disappearance of Angel Manfredo Velásquez Rodríguez. Her testimony was used to establish the fact that forced disappearances were Honduran state policy and not just random incidents. Although her own case was not the subject of the proceedings, Murillo put her life in danger to serve as a witness. Two other witnesses were murdered. Murillo has never attempted to bring her case to justice in Honduras. She continues to live in exile, fearing for her life should she return. Since her release, Murillo has devoted her professional life to human rights work, assisting others whose fundamental rights have been violated.

#### The Rev. James Francis Guadalupe Carney

The disappearance of the Rev. James Francis Carney is significant because Carney was a U.S. citizen and because of credible allegations that U.S. military and intelligence personnel were directly involved.

A Jesuit priest from St. Louis, Carney began working as a missionary in Honduras in 1961. He dedicated his life there to helping organize the poor in their struggle for land and labor rights. Carney took the name "Padre Guadalupe" to show his reverence for the Virgin of Guadalupe. His deep connection with the country and its people led him to renounce his U.S. citizenship and become a naturalized Honduran citizen in 1974.

Carney wrote in his autobiography, published posthumously as "To Be a Christian Is... To Be a Revolutionary": "Why are the campesinos so poor in this rich valley? They are farmers who do not have any land! We rebel against that, even if they call us communists, even if they kill us. We have to wake our people up, tell them to get organized, help them to change the situation." Because of Carney's work for social change, the Honduran government in 1979 revoked his citizenship and expelled him.

Carney relocated to a parish in Nicaragua and worked with campesinos there during the early years of the Sandinista government. He continued, however, to feel an inseparable tie with Honduras. In 1983 he became chaplain to a group of 96 Honduran guerrillas from the Central America Revolutionary Workers Party who were training in Nicaragua. Their mission was to

return to Honduras and launch a fight for land reform and social justice. This armed group entered Honduras in July 1983 and was quickly defeated by Honduran troops with U.S. logistic support. Some members of the group were killed; others were captured. Carney's fate is unknown, and his body was never found.

Although the Honduran government claimed Carney died of hunger in the mountains on the Nicaraguan border, press accounts at the time and declassified U.S. government documents present conflicting and inconclusive information. Eyewitness reports emerged that he was captured by the Honduran army, and possibly tortured and executed. A primary source of information was Florencio Caballero, a former army officer in Battalion 3-16 who deserted in 1986 and was granted political asylum in Canada.

Caballero, in interviews with the Carney family and The New York Times, said Carney was taken to Aguacate, a military base operated by the CIA inside Honduras for the Nicaraguan Contras. He said execution orders came from the commander of the Honduran Armed Forces, Gen. Gustavo Álvarez Martínez, in the presence of a CIA officer, and that Carney was subsequently tortured and thrown alive out of a helicopter over the Honduran jungle.

In September 1983 the Honduran military held a press conference to officially report Carney's disappearance. They displayed his religious vestments, chalice and bible, claiming it had been found in an arms cache of the guerrillas. Since that time, Carney's family and Honduran human rights investigators have sought to determine his fate. Members of the Carney family made numerous trips to Honduras, meeting with Honduran military and U.S. embassy officials, guerrilla prisoners, human rights activists and journalists. Honduran officials were tight-lipped, and the family's frustrations increased as they realized that the U.S. government was no more forthcoming with information or willing to investigate further.

In the United States, family members contacted the White House, Congress, and the State Department, and also submitted Freedom of Information Act requests in 1983 and 1984. Although the family did receive some documents from the CIA, the Army, and the State and Defense departments, substantial portions were blacked out. Government agencies also withheld more than 300 requested documents under the guise of "national security." The family continued to pursue the release of those documents that had been withheld, going so far as to file a lawsuit against 10 government agencies in 1988 under the FOIA and the Privacy Acts to compel the release of requested records, but without success.

In the 1990s, requests for U.S. government information submitted by The Baltimore Sun and Honduran government representatives yielded some additional information regarding the Carney case. In 1997, the CIA and Defense Department released new, but heavily censored, documents to the Carney family and Honduran government officials. That same year, the CIA inspector general issued a classified report on an internal investigation into CIA activities in Honduras in the 1980s, including its knowledge of human rights abuses. The report was partially declassified the following year, but more than half of its text remains blacked out. (See "Access to U.S. Government Information on Human Rights Violations in Honduras" for more information.)

Despite the trickle of U.S. government information over the past two decades, there is still no definitive answer to how Carney died and who was responsible. Declassified documents reveal that U.S. military and embassy personnel were involved in debriefing captured guerrillas, but deny any knowledge of Carney's whereabouts. While the CIA adamantly denies any role in the Carney case, it does now acknowledge that the Honduran military may have been involved in his death. Nevertheless, it has failed to provide to Honduran investigators the detailed information that led the agency to reach that conclusion. The CIA has yet to respond to current Freedom of Information Act requests for information that may be hidden within the many blacked-out pages of its released documents.

The Carney family and Honduran human rights investigators continue to hope that the priest's remains will one day be found. Investigators continue to locate secret burial sites and human remains dating back to the 1980s. As recently as January 2003, remains were found that were thought to be Carney's but this was later proven not to be the case. The discovery of Carney's remains would increase the possibility that the case could be prosecuted in Honduran courts.

## **Appendix One: CIA Stipulations (from Congressional Record, September 13, 2001)**

### **i. STIPULATIONS FROM INTELLIGENCE REPORTING CABLE**

1. Information summarized in 1995 indicates that during the early 1980's, the **Public Security Forces in Honduras (FUSEP)** had a special unit involved in countering domestic subversive movements. In addition, from 1980-1984, the National Directorate of Investigation (DNI), a unit of FUSEP, maintained a secret unit known as the **Honduran Anti-Communist Liberation Army (ELACH)**. ELACH's operations included surveillance kidnappings, interrogation under duress, and execution of prisoners who were Honduran Revolutionaries. ELACH reportedly maintained an informal liaison with members of the special unit of the Public Security Forces in Honduras.
2. In April 1983, based on the recommendation of a joint U.S./Honduran Military Seminar, the Honduran Military resolved to convert the FUSEP Special Unit and place it under the supervision of the Military Intelligence Division of the Armed Forces General Staff. This occurred in early 1984 and the unit was renamed the Military Intelligence BN.
3. From late 1980 to circa 1983, the United States Government maintained contact with the command structure with the objective of assisting in the creation of an effective mechanism to counter the growing threat from domestic subversive movement and from regional organizations operating in Honduras with links to the Sandinistas and Cuba.
4. The Military BN was dissolved in September 1987.

### **ii. STIPULATIONS FROM CIA INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORT**

1. Congressional and National Security Council (NSC) interest in the *Baltimore Sun's* allegations prompted then-Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) John M. Deutch to direct that a review be conducted of all CIA files to determine CIA's role in Honduras and whether its personnel were linked to human rights abuses there from 1980 to 1995. The Honduras Working Group was established in July 1995 to conduct this review and published its final report in August 1996. Based upon the written record, selected interviews that were conducted by the Office of Personnel Security (OPS) on behalf of the Honduras Working Group, and responses to questionnaires that the Honduras Working Group prepared and distributed to 34 CIA officers in an attempt to resolve several issues, the review resulted in the following findings:
  - There is no information in CIA files indicating that CIA officers either authorized or were directly involved in human rights abuses;
  - The Honduran military committed hundreds of human rights abuses since 1980, many of which were politically motivated and officially sanctioned;
  - CIA reporting linked Honduran military personnel to "death squad" activities;
2. In the early 1980's, the U.S. Government provided assistance to several Honduran military units.
3. Reporting indicated that a number of people from these Honduran units were involved in human rights abuses from 1980 to 1996.
4. The CIA's record in reporting human rights abuses was inconsistent. In some cases, reporting was timely and complete. In other cases [excised text] information was not reported at all [excised text] or was mentioned only in internal CIA channels and not disseminated to other agencies; CIA reporting to Congress in the early 1980's underestimated Honduran [excised text] involvement in abuses. By the mid-1980's, CIA provided more detailed information to Congress, but some of the notifications were inaccurate.

5. Cooperation with Honduran military units provided access to significant information about the Honduran military and its activities.
6. In July 1983, a small (96 member) group associated with the Central American Revolutionary Workers Party (PRTC) entered the Olancho Department of Honduras from Nicaragua. In August 1983, the Honduran military became aware of their presence. The guerrilla group was quickly overwhelmed by the Honduran military in August and September 1983, and its leader (Reyes Mata) was captured and killed. The Honduran military operation was followed closely by the U.S. Embassy and reported in the local media.
7. The U.S. Government had advance intelligence information indicating a possible Central American Revolutionary Workers Party military operation.
8. In late September 1983, the U.S. Embassy became aware that a U.S. priest, Father James Carney, who had been traveling with the guerrilla group, was missing, and began an investigation. Ambassador Negroponce and senior Embassy staff met with the Carney family on September 28.
9. In September 1983, Ambassador Negroponce requested additional analytical assistance from the U.S. Government about the Olancho Guerrilla movement, including U.S. participation in the debriefing of deserters and captives.
10. Subsequently, Ambassador Negroponce urged Embassy personnel to exploit the failure of the guerrillas from a broader regional standpoint.
11. In October 1983, U.S. intelligence prepared reports regarding information it had received about the capture and summary execution of as many as nine Central American Revolutionary Workers Party guerrillas. Dissemination of these reports was limited because of Ambassador Negroponce's concern about leaks. This information regarding the reports of guerrilla executions was reported to the President in October 1983.
12. In early November 1983, after receiving the intelligence reports on the guerrilla executions, Deputy Assistant Secretary Craig Johnstone wrote Ambassador Negroponce and urged that he demarche General Alvarez regarding this matter. Negroponce met with Alvarez, who denied the reports. Negroponce reported back to Johnstone by letter. He noted the conflict between the intelligence reports and General Alvarez, raised questions about the reliability of the sources upon which the reports were based, and therefore urged that the United States not pursue the specific matter further with Alvarez.
13. In an interview with CIA Inspector General, Ambassador Negroponce recalled as follows:

Former U.S. Ambassador to Honduras Negroponce describes three significant concerns that were dominant throughout his assignment in Honduras. First, regional instability affecting Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. In this context, he says attempts were made to keep Honduras on an even keel by providing large amounts of economic and military assistance. A second concern related to the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and was being addressed by U.S. assistance to the Contras. The third concern was that the United States was attempting to promote democracy in Honduras after the 1981 presidential election; the first in nine years.

Negroponce indicates that there were instances of human rights abuses in Honduras and that he used diplomatic channels—calling on President Suazo, the Foreign Minister, or the Commander-in-Chief—to address them when they arose. Additionally, the Embassy used “quiet diplomacy” to suggest methods, such as the Administration of Justice Program, to prevent future abuses and ensure proper treatment of prisoners. Negroponce, although not justifying human rights abuses, says he believed Honduras had a much better human rights records than its neighboring countries.

Negroponete states that Defense Attache Office and the Political Section had reporting responsibility for the Olancho Operation. Additionally, [excised text] was expected to provide information [excised text]. There were no contemporaneous complaints, says Negroponete, regarding the absence of reporting on the Olancho insurgency. The insurgency was viewed as a threat to the security of Honduras and as a precursor of additional attempts to invade the country.

Negroponete says he became aware of the two CIA Sensitive Memoranda regarding prisoner executions via Johnstone's November 2, 1983 correspondence. He indicates that Johnstone used a memorandum, not an electronic message, due to the sensitive nature of the information and was trying to prevent broad distribution in light of the volatile political environment concerning Central America. After confronting Commander-in-Chief Alvarez and hearing his denials, Negroponete says he harbored doubts over the accuracy of the reports of executions and recommended that the situation be closely monitored for future developments. If additional credible information were received, the matter would be revisited in order to take further action.

Negroponete believes [excised text] personnel were concerned about human rights and notes that the Embassy was probably the busiest in the world and was focused on a variety of regional issues. At no time, says Negroponete, did he suggest [excised text] that it not report on a subject.

At the time of the insurgency, Negroponete states that Father Carney's citizenship was unclear, but the Embassy vigorously pursued details of his fate as if he were a U.S. citizen. After Carney's family made inquiries at the Embassy, he says the Consul General was assigned the task of investigating the circumstance surrounding the priest's disappearance. After the Consul General interviewed the captured insurgents, Negroponete recalls that the Embassy became convinced that Carney had died of natural causes due to the lack of nourishment. No information was obtained that indicated that the priest had been executed.

Commander-in-Chief Alvarez was ousted from his position in March 1984. Thereafter, Negroponete recalls, disappearances stopped, human rights concerns diminished, and issues relating to possible abuses committed during the Olancho Operation no longer required monitoring.

14. In November 1983, a reliable source reported that a member of the Honduran military had shot guerrilla leader Reyes Mata and that Commander-in-Chief Alvarez had probably been consulted.

15. On November 17, 1983, a draft report was sent to Embassy. The report was circulated to the U.S. Government the next day. The report specifically named the Honduran officer who killed Reyes Mata. It also indicated that Commander-in-Chief Alvarez was consulted before and after the execution. CIA headquarters indicated that the basic information in the draft report—that prisoners had been executed—could not be refuted.

16. CIA headquarters was made aware that Ambassador Negroponete was particularly sensitive on the subject set forth in the draft report and having been concerned that prior intelligence reporting on the same topic might create a human rights problem for Honduras.

17. On November 25, 1983, Embassy Charge Shep Lowman wrote in an "eyes only" message to U.S. Assistant Chief of Staff General William Odom and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Craig Johnstone concerning the Defense Attache Office comments on the draft report. Lowman wrote that the Defense Attache Office comments tended to contradict information in the draft, and that: "The subject matter, however, is so sensitive that we would urge that any further dissemination on this subject should be sharply limited and, as had been the case with previous [excised text] reports, by memorandum restricted to designated addressees only."

18. Ambassador Negroponete believes that the dissemination of intelligence from Tegucigalpa Embassy was not affected by Honduran support to U.S. [excised text] programs. He says the Embassy did its best to collect relevant information and follow up on details concerning the fate of the Olancho insurgents and believes that there was no complacency by any Embassy component in reporting on the Olancho Operation.

Negroponete says that he was out of the country from November 22 to 25, 1983 when discussions about the draft report were held within the Embassy. Negroponete believes that the sentiments attributed to him in the November 22, 1983 [excised text] report concerning the 1983 draft report are not accurate. Negroponete says that his position at the time was that it should be made certain that prisoner executions had occurred before taking further action such as publicizing the information or confronting President Suazo. He says he wanted to confirm details of the reported executions before the information was widely disseminated as it would become a significant political issue in Washington that could affect the [excised text] program.

Negroponete says that his sentiments on the subject of executions are reflected in his November 18, 1983 response to Deputy Assistant Secretary Johnstone.

### **iii. CIA WORKING GROUP REPORT STIPULATIONS**

1. During the 1980-1984 period, the Honduran Military committed most of the hundreds of human rights abuses reported in Honduras. These abuses were often politically motivated and officially sanctioned.

2. Some Honduran military units received United States Government assistance. Information available to the United States Government indicated that some members of these units, and others, were linked to "death squad" activities such as killings, disappearances, and other human rights abuses.

3. As a result of United States policy countering Cuban/Nicaraguan communist-backed insurgencies in Central America, intelligence collection and reporting requirements on human rights abuses were subordinated to higher priorities.

4. Between 1984-1987 the FUSEP Special Unit was converted to the Battalion 316. These units were involved in similar counter-subversive activities.

5. As a result of a file review and other information available to the United States Government, some 250 alleged abuses of human rights were identified.

6. FUSEP Special Unit and Battalion 316 counter-terrorist tactics included torture, rape, assassination against persons thought to be involved in support of Salvadoran guerrillas or past of the Honduran leftist movement. Information available to the United States Government in the 1980's indicated that named individuals were abducted and killed by Battalion 316 and the FUSEP Special Unit.

7. "Death Squads" used tactics such as killings, kidnapping, torture, and clandestine abduction.

8. The United States was aware of one death squad in Honduras that operated between 1980 and 1984. It was known as the Honduran Anti-Communist Liberation Army (ELACH). Reports indicate that ELACH was responsible for the killings of a number of leftists during that period. This information was disseminated and was the focus of Congressional concern. Although promises were made to investigate and/or expand upon these initial reports, there is no written evidence that these promises were met.

9. Unsubstantiated information links Honduran Military Command and high-ranking government officials, with the ELACH.

10. The United States Government does not have sufficient information to definitively rule out the possibility that the Honduran military may have captured, interrogated, and killed Father James Carney.

11. It has been reported that some Honduran military records of human rights violations were destroyed in 1995 at the direction of the Honduran military command.

12. Information is available to the United States Government which linked the Chief of Honduran Department of National Investigations from June 1982 to January 1984 to the Honduran Anti-Communist Liberation Army "Death Squad" activities. The Government of Honduras dismissed this officer in 1984 after the death of a prisoner while in the custody of the Honduran Department of National Investigations.

**Appendix Two: Declassified Documents on ELACH Activities** *(These are electronic transcriptions of original documents and include brackets noting excised segments; original documents should be consulted before quoting or denoting excised areas.)*

**Document One**

**Fecha:** 1985.11.26

**Fuente:** CIA Declassification (8/97), Document H2-20 and NSA FOIA Request 980326CIA057, CIA Reference # F-1998-01106, SECRET, 4 pp.

**Titulo:** 1. HONDURAN LEFTISTS EXECUTED BY THE HONDURAN ANTI-COMMUNIST LIBERATION ARMY BETWEEN 1980-1984; 2. HONDURAN LEFTISTS PLACED UNDER SURVEILLANCE BY "ELACH" IN 1985

[P. 1] [EXCISED]

[EXCISED] PAGE 001 [EXCISED]  
TOR: 260238Z NOV 85 [EXCISED]

[EXCISED]

COUNTRY: HONDURAS

SUBJ 1. HONDURAN LEFTISTS EXECUTED BY THE HONDURAN ANTI-COMMUNIST LIBERATION ARMY BETWEEN 1980-1984;  
2. HONDURAN LEFTISTS PLACED UNDER SURVEILLANCE BY "ELACH" IN 1985

DOI: 1980-EARLY NOVEMBER 1985

[EXCISED]

[P. 2] [EXCISED]

TEXT: 1. BETWEEN 1980, WHEN THE HONDURAN ANTI-COMMUNIST LIBERATION ARMY ELACH WAS FOUNDED, AND 1984, WHEN ELACH KIDNAPPINGS AND EXECUTIONS WERE ENDED, AT LEAST NINE HONDURAN LEFTISTS WERE KIDNAPPED AND SUBSEQUENTLY EXECUTED BY ELACH AT THE ORDER OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL DIRECTORATE OF INVESTIGATIONS (DNI). WHEN ELACH CONDUCTED A KIDNAPPING AND KILLING, ITS ACTION WAS COORDINATED WITH DNI, AND OCCASIONALLY PERSONNEL FROM ELACH AND THE DNI WORKED JOINTLY IN SUCH OPERATIONS.

2. INDIVIDUALS KIDNAPPED AND KILLED BETWEEN 1980 AND 1984 BY ELACH WERE PABLO ((MORAN)), TOMAS ((NATIVI)), FIDEL ((MARTINEZ)), ANGEL MANFREDO ((VELASQUEZ)), HERMINIO ((CACERES)) CASTELLANOS, SAMUEL ((PEREZ)), NELSON ((MAKAY)) [MACKAY], JOSE ERNESTO ((VELASQUEZ)), AND EDUARDO ((LANZA)) BECERRA. [EXCISED] COMMENT: SOURCE DID NOT PROVIDE MORE EXACT DATES FOR THESE EVENTS.)

3. [EXCISED] COMMENT: ALL THE ABOVE WERE REPORTED KILLED OR DISAPPEARED IN 1981 AND 1982. ACCORDING TO THE BOOK "HUMAN RIGHTS IN HONDURAS" BY LICILA [LUCILA] FUNES DE TORRES, PUBLISHED BY THE HONDURAN DOCUMENTATION CENTER IN 1984, ONE PABLO MORAN, NOT FURTHER IDENTIFIED, DISAPPEARED AFTER BEING ARRESTED BY DNI PERSONNEL IN JANUARY 1981 IN SAN PEDRO SULA. ACCORDING TO AN OFFICIAL SERVICE, ONE FRANCISCO PABLO MORAN, A HONDURAN NATIONAL, POSSIBLY IDENTIFIABLE WITH PABLO MORAN, TRANSIT[ED] PANAMA CITY EN ROUTE TO CUBA, PROBABLY FOR GUERRILLA TRAINING, IN MARCH 1980. NO ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATION IS KNOWN. TOMAS NATIVI WAS WELL-KNOWN

AS A LONG-TIME CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBER OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF HONDURAS (PCH) AND RESIDENT OF THE USSR, AND SUBSEQUENTLY A FOUNDER AND SENIOR LEADER OF THE PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY UNION (URP/CINCHONEROS). HIS 11 JUNE 1981 CAPTURE AND SUBSEQUENT EXECUTION BY GOVERNMENT AGENTS WAS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED IN [EXCISED] FIDEL MARTINEZ, ALSO AN URP LEADER, WAS ALSO CAPTURED ON 11 JUNE 1981, AS REPORTED [EXCISED] HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO THE FUNES BOOK, MARTINEZ MAY HAVE BEEN KILLED RESISTING CAPTURE. ANGEL MANFREDO VALASQUEZ [VELASQUEZ] IS LISTED IN THE FUNES BOOK AS VICE PRESIDENT OF THE ECONOMICS STUDENTS FEDERATION, WHO DISAPPEARED AFTER BEING CAPTURED BY DNI AGENTS ON 8 SEPTEMBER 1981. NO OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATION IS KNOWN. HERMINIO CACERES CASTELLANOS IS LISTED IN THE FUNES BOOK AS HAVING DISAPPEARED AFTER BEING CAPTURED BY DNI AGENTS IN DANLI, EL PARAISO, ON 19 SEPTEMBER 1981, WITH OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES UNKNOWN. NO FURTHER INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE ABOUT CACERES. SAMUEL PEREZ IS REPORTED IN THE FUNES BOOK AS HAVING DISAPPEARED AFTER BEING CAPTURED BY DNI AGENTS AT THE GUASAULE BORDER CROSSING POST AS HE WAS ENTERING HONDURAS FROM NICARAGUA

SECRET

[P. 3] ON 24 JANUARY 1982. NO FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT HIS AFFILIATIONS IS AVAILABLE. NELSON MACKAY IS LISTED IN THE FUNES BOOK AS A LAWYER WHO DISAPPEARED ON 21 FEBRUARY 1982 AFTER LEAVING HIS HOME TO PURCHASE NEWSPAPERS. NO FURTHER INFORMATION IS KNOWN ABOUT HIS AFFILIATIONS. JOSE ERNESTO VELAZQUEZ [VELASQUEZ] IS LISTED IN THE FUNES BOOK AS HAVING DISAPPEARED AFTER HAVING BEEN CAPTURED BY DNI AGENTS AND TREASURY POLICE AT THE BORDER IN EL TRIUNFO, CHOLUTECA DEPARTMENT, ON 7 MAY 1982, AS HE WAS RETURNING TO HONDURAS AFTER THREE YEARS OF RESIDENCE IN NICARAGUA. NO OTHER INFORMATION ON HIS AFFILIATIONS IS KNOWN.

EDUARDO LANZA BECERRA IS LISTED IN THE FUNES BOOK AS EDUARDO ((BECERRA)) LANZA, AND IDENTIFIED AS SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE HONDURAN [HONDURAN] UNIVERSITY STUDENTS FEDERATION FEUH) HE IS LISTED IN THE BOOK AS HAVING DISAPPEARED AFTER BEING CAPTURED BY DNI AGENTS IN TEGUCIGALPA ON 1 AUGUST 1982.)

4. [EXCISED]

5. [EXCISED]

[EXCISED]

6. [EXCISED]

[P. 4] [ENTIRE PAGE EXCISED]

## **Document Two**

**Fecha:** 1986.03.18

**Fuente:** Baltimore Sun Declassification, Memorandum, 9 pp.

**Titulo:** TRIP TO HONDURAS

[p. 1] TO: THE RECORD  
FROM: [EXCISED]  
DATE: MARCH 18, 1986  
SUBJECT: TRIP TO HONDURAS

Between March 14 and 16, SSCI staff representing [excised] participated in a trip to Honduras. Our objective was to assess

- the current state of the Contra resistance effort, both military and logistical through visits to Contra bases and support facilities on the Honduran/Nicaraguan border;
- the status of the humanitarian assistance program, being implemented by the Department of State;
- and the relationship of the Honduran government to the Contras.

#### MEETING WITH U.S. AMBASSADOR, JOHN FERCH

On March 14, 1986, staff delegation met with U.S. ambassador to Honduras, John Ferch. Ferch, a career Foreign Service Officer with 28 years of experience in Central and South America came to Honduras after serving as head of the U.S. Cuban interest section in Havana.

The government of Honduras had for a number of months denied landing rights to contract transport carrying Congressionally appropriated humanitarian assistance for the Contras. Ambassador Ferch indicated that Honduran opposition was based solely on former President Suazo's attempt to overturn the results of the Honduran election and thereby retain power. Because the United States openly opposed Suazo's efforts, Ferch indicated that Suazo attempted to use the denial of landing rights for humanitarian assistance as a lever to force the U.S. to support the continuation of his rule.

The ascendance of the newly-elected President Jose Azcona has resulted in a resumption of Honduran acquiescence in the use of Honduran facilities for debarkation and transport of U.S. humanitarian assistance for UNO.

[p. 2] While citing Honduran support for the U.S. program, Ferch admitted that its visibility created potential political problems for the Honduran government which has always denied the existence of Contras or Contra bases within Honduran borders.

Ferch also recognized the potential significant logistical and political problems which may result from the management of two U.S. programs, lethal and humanitarian simultaneously.

Nevertheless, Ferch maintained that although Azcona would never publicly support a program of U.S. covert assistance to the Contras, the government of Honduras would continue to allow the U.S. and the Contras to create staging areas for the program within Honduras.

The Ambassador dismissed any political downside for Azcona in allowing the Contra force to operate within his borders. The key, according to Ferch is to continue to allow Azcona to operate under the principle of plausible denial.

#### MEETING WITH HONDURAN PRESIDENT JOSE AZCONA

Ambassador Ferch accompanied the staff delegation to a meeting with newly-elected President of Honduras, Jose Azcona. Azcona made the following points;

- Nicaragua does not represent a military threat to Honduras, but rather a subversive threat should the Sandinistas be allowed to solidify control over Nicaragua.
- U.S. policy toward Nicaragua should be based on two tracks, pressure and diplomacy. Azcona did not specify the form that pressure should take.
- U.S. directed pressure should always leave the Sandinistas with a "way out" to negotiate a political settlement. This was a message which Azcona reiterated on numerous occasions in our conversation. The alternative to applying pressure now, according to Azcona, was either to crush the Sandinistas with force or leave them isolated in the region as a totalitarian regime.
- When questioned on various compromises on lethal and humanitarian assistance currently before the Congress, Azcona agreed with an approach that would provide some period of time (e.g. 90 days) during which negotiations could be reconvened, before lethal assistance is provided. At the same time, Azcona

made it clear that the Sandinistas were unlikely to reverse themselves or change their institutions without some pressure being applied.

[p. 3] VISIT TO FDN LOGISTICAL SUPPLY HEADQUARTERS, TEGUCIGALPA

The FDN maintains a number of administrative safe houses in Tegucigalpa, including a logistical supply center.

Observations:

- The FDN has implemented thorough inventory accounting procedures to account for weapons, ammunitions and humanitarian assistance. Monthly inventory reports on weapons/ammunition are provided [excised] In addition, careful records are kept on dispersal of all supplies, lethal and humanitarian, to specific FDN units.
- Implication is that there is a credible basis upon which to determine specific weapon/ammunition which should be supplied via lethal aid.
- The strength of the inventory is clear -- a sizeable amount of direct fire weapons and ammunition, e.g. in excess of 15 million rounds of AK-47 ammunition and 2.5 million NATO rounds of ammunition. It is critical to determine just how long such a supply of direct fire weapons would sustain an 8,000-9,000 man force within Nicaragua. In the very near term, it would appear that the current inventory of these items pose no problems for the Contras.
- What is lacking is also quite clear. There is virtually no stand off capability in the FDN inventory, e.g. mortars, grenades and grenade launchers, etc. Aside from guns and bullets, the inventory is too diverse and limited to be of any meaningful assistance to the Contras.

Bottom line

While it is clear that failure to provide lethal assistance will not affect the Contras in the very near term, it is also clear that given the inventory of weaponry, achieving military objectives within Nicaragua against armor, helicopter gunships and heavily fixed position (e.g. repeater stations) will be difficult to achieve.

[p. 4] VISIT TO FDN BASE CAMP: YAMALES ON THE HONDURAN BORDER

Staff, accompanied by [excised] was helicoptered to FDN base camp at Yamales on the Honduran border. The helicopter used was owned and maintained by the Honduran army and piloted by [excised] On the evening previous to our arrival at Yamales, the Nicaraguan army had crossed the Honduran border to strike at Contra positions some 5-8 miles from Yamales.

Observations:

[excised - 2 paragraphs]

- [excised] responsible for reporting receipt of U.S. humanitarian assistance from FDN distribution center at Aguacate.
- There were perhaps 200 or 20 FDN troops at the camp at the time of the staff visit. Troops included both men and women and numerous young combatants between the ages of 13-15.
- Recently received assistance, food, clothing, medicine, was visible in numerous supply tents at the camp.

Staff delegation was provided an operational brief by FDN commanders and Chief of the FDN Army Colonel Enrique Bermudez.

Observations:

- There are currently approximately 9,500 FDN fighters within Nicaragua, with approximately 3500 having infiltrated over the border during the last 10 days.
- The 3,500 recently infiltrated troops are on their way to specifically defined military objectives including

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- cutting off the Rama Road,
  - cutting off the Panamanian Highway,
  - destruction of Sandinista communication facilities,
  - destruction of electrical power stations and other significant economic infrastructure targets.
- A recently returned FDN task force had reported destroying a government-owned tobacco warehouse in northwestern Nicaragua.
- The immediate military objective of the FDN is to seal off the pacific region of Nicaragua by cutting off all supply lines and major road links to the region.

#### HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

Staff attempted to determine the veracity of human rights abuses committed by the FDN, principally through:

- [excised]
- interview with FDN non-commissioned officers recently returned from Nicaragua/ and
- assessment of FDN rules of engagement and training regarding human rights.

Observations:

- When questioned as to accuracy of Christopher Dickey's recent book outlining Contra abuses, [excised] conceded that the description of events in the book is accurate, however, he noted that the commander responsible for the atrocities cited by Dickey has been tried and executed by the FDN.
- [excised] while abuses occurred in the past (1981-84 timeframe), the FDN had gone a long way toward purging itself of the elements responsible for abuses.
- [excised]

[p. 6] - There is extensive reporting on a regular basis on FDN abuses [excised] in Honduras [excised]

- It would be worth the effort to match reports recently issued by Washington-base non-profit organizations against [excised -FDN?] reporting on Contra abuses.

- Conversations with FDN NCO's on human rights abuses indicated the following: FDN units usually infiltrated to areas in Nicaragua in which their families and friends live. According to them, their ability to operate in Nicaragua effectively over long periods of time -- e.g., the 6,000 men of the Jorge Salazar task forces who have been operating in Nicaragua for over a year -- requires the infrastructure of support (food and housing provided by the Nicaraguan people). As a result, from a tactical perspective, they expressed the view that they would gain little from antagonizing the indigenous populations.

- The FDN has established a new training facility in the mountains which was visited by the staff. The training center, known as CIM, trains both new recruits and NCO's with combat experience. Staff review of the six-week training manual indicated weekly dedicated sessions, rules of engagement, human rights, and treatment of prisoners. The training center has graduated over 1,200 FDN troops in its first class, and is now training its second class of in excess of 950 men.

#### OPERATION OF HONDURAN DEATH SQUADS

In a recent letter to the SSCI, the DCI described human rights abuses in Honduras. Mr. Casey outlined the activities of the National Directorate of Investigations (DNI) and its relationship to ELACH, a right-wing death squad. Between 1980-84, the "symbiotic relationship" between DNI and ELACH resulted in the execution of at least nine persons who were Honduran leftists. Each of these executions are personally approved by the Armed Forces Commander and by the President.

[excised]

[p. 7] Finally in his letter, the DCI expressed concern that ELACH "continues to be a viable organization and has high level contracts in the government. Consequently we are examining what measures we can take to

resolve this problem and bring the matter to the attention of the appropriate senior Honduran Government officials, including President Azcona."

Observations:

- It is clear that in conversation with [excised] that [excised] investigation of DNI activities was retrospective in nature. [excised] In short, it remains unclear as to what we knew, when we knew it, and why we took so long to terminate the relationship with the DNI.

-- [excised]

-- [excised]

-- The 316 MIB was scheduled to be disbanded in January of 1986 and to become the counterintelligence component of a new Honduran intelligence service [excised] It is now anticipated that the 316 MIB will be disbanded in the March/April 1986 timeframe. [excised]

-- The 316 MIB reports directly to the Chief of Honduran Intelligence and the Commander of the Armed Forces.

-- The battalion continues to conduct surveillance operations against Honduran leftists. [excised] could not guarantee that there was no hand-over of information from the battalion to ELACH because of the high level contacts ELACH maintains with members of the Honduran Armed Forces.

-- [excised] is absolutely certain that since 1984 there have been no murders, kidnappings or torture of any Honduran leftists. [excised]

-- [excised]

[p. 8] ADMINISTRATION OF PROGRAM OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE BY DEPARTMENT OF STATE

In a recent staff briefing, Ambassador Robert Duemling expressed the concern that he received little in the way of intelligence reporting to substantiate the receipt of humanitarian assistance by UNO. Duemling expressed frustration with the fact that he had little control over the program beyond approving UNO requests, and disbursing funds to suppliers from Miami bank accounts. He complained of having no role in arranging landing rights for flights transporting materiel from FDN warehouses in New Orleans.

Observations:

-- [excised] there has been extensive reporting [excised] on the receipt of NHAO approved supplies.

-- [excised]

-- The delivery of NHAO supplies from Aguacate to FDN base camps is confirmed [excised]

-- NHAO has had two of its own employees at Aguacate for the past two weeks -- the time period during which most or all of the NHAO supplies have arrived.

-- The FDN logistical center in Tegucigalpa also maintains manifests of received NHAO supplies, [excised]

In light of the fact that there appears to be extensive formal CIA reporting on the receipt of NHAO supplies, it is unclear why Ambassador Duemling does not receive the information. Though Duemling indicated that he meets regularly with Alan Fiers, Director of Central American Task Force, it is unclear why what appears to be readily available information is not provided to Duemling.

-- The CIA clears the landing of transport plans carrying humanitarian supplies with the Honduran government.

-- In part one of the problems in keeping the visibility of the program low within Honduras is [excised] the "unreliability" of

[p. 9] Mario Calero. Calero manages operation of FDN warehouses in New Orleans, and arranges for air transportation for NHAO supplies. Calero apparently is not dependable in following through on specified shipping arrangements, e.g. date and time of arrival of NHAO's shipments, thereby creating potential embarrassment for the Honduran Government.

### **Document Three**

**Fecha:** 1995.02.18

**Fuente:** CIA Declassification (22 October 1998), Document H4-4, Secret CIA Cable, approved for released September 1998, 8 pp.

**Titulo:** THE 316TH MI BATTALION

**Sumario:** According to the 1997 CIA IG Report, page 60, paragraph 165, the National Security Council was provided with this background paper on Battalion 316.

[p. 1] SECRET

[excised]

SECRET [excised]

[excised]

[excised] PAGE 001 [excised]  
[excised] 2181220Z FEB 95 [excised]

[excised]

SUBJECT: THE 316TH MI BATTALION

[excised]

TEXT:

1. [excised]

2. [excised] INFORMATION WAS GLEANED FROM NUMEROUS FILES, AND ALTHOUGH HQS WAS UNABLE TO FIND A DEFINITIVE STUDY ON THE BATTALION, HOPE THE FOLLOWING HELPS.

3. [excised]

[excised]

SECRET

[p. 2] SECRET

[excised]

[excised] DURING THE EARLY 1980S FUSEP HAD THREE DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONS UNDER ITS CONTROL: (A) THE NATIONAL DIRECTORATE OF INVESTIGATION (DNI); (B) [excised] SPECIAL UNIT WHICH PROVIDED TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO THE ARMS INTERDICTION PROGRAM (MATERIAL FROM NICARAGUA PASSED THROUGH HONDURAS TO GUERRILLAS IN EL SALVADOR), [excised] AND (C) THE REGULAR NATIONAL POLICE UNITS STATIONED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. IN ADDITION, [excised] THE DNI MAINTAINED A SECRET UNIT -- THE HONDURAN ANTI-COMMUNIST LIBERATION ARMY (ELACH), A RIGHTIST PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATION WHICH CONDUCTED OPERATIONS AGAINST HONDURAN LEFTISTS. ACCORDING TO [excised], DURING THE PERIOD ELACH OPERATED (1980-1984), ELACH'S OPERATIONS INCLUDED SURVEILLANCE, KIDNAPPINGS, INTERROGATION UNDER DURESS, AND EXECUTION OF PRISONERS WHO WERE HONDURAN REVOLUTIONARIES. ELACH REPORTEDLY MAINTAINED AN INFORMAL LIAISON WITH MEMBERS OF THE SPECIAL UNIT [excised] EXPRESSED STRONG CONCERN TO THE HONDURAN GOVERNMENT AND FUSEP IN PARTICULAR OVER THE USE OF REPRESSIVE MEASURES BY THE

SECURITY SERVICES. IN AN EFFORT TO CONVINCING FUSEP THAT ABUSIVE TECHNIQUES SHOULD NOT BE USED AND DID NOT HAVE TO BE USED IN INTERROGATING A DETAINEE, [excised] REPEATEDLY INSTRUCTED AGAINST THE USE OF PHYSICAL ABUSE OR TORTURE.

4. IN APRIL 1983, BASED ON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE "STRATEGIC MILITARY SEMINAR" BETWEEN THE HONDURAN AND THE U.S. MILITARY, THE HONDURAN ARMED FORCES RESOLVED TO CONVERT THE SPECIAL UNIT OF FUSEP INTO A MILITARY INTELLIGENCE, RATHER THAN A POLICE UNIT, AND TO PLACE IT UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE MILITARY INTEL DIVISION OF THE HONDURAN ARMED FORCES GENERAL STAFF. [excised], THE PURPOSE OF THIS CHANGE WAS TO IMPROVE COORDINATION AND CONTROL, TO MAKE AVAILABLE GREATER PERSONNEL RESOURCES, AND TO

[excised]

SECRET

[p. 3] SECRET

[excised]

INTEGRATE THE INTEL PRODUCTION. IN EARLY 1984, THE SPECIAL UNIT WAS PLACED UNDER THE COMMAND OF THE MILITARY INTEL DIVISION AND RENAMED THE 316TH BATTALION [excised], WHERE IT CONTINUED TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO THE ARMS INTERDICTION PROGRAM. WITH THE TRANSFER OF THE SPECIAL UNIT FROM FUSEP TO MILITARY INTEL, [excised]

5. [excised]. IN 1980 THE SPECIAL UNIT WAS LOCATED INSIDE THE FUSEP COMPOUND, BUT SOMETIME IN 1981 OR 1982 IT MOVED TO ANOTHER SITE ABOUT A MILE FROM THE COMPOUND, A MOVE DETERMINED NECESSARY BY THE GROWTH IN THE UNIT AND THE NEED TO AFFORD A MEASURE OF SECURITY TO ITS PERSONNEL NOT POSSIBLE INSIDE THE POLICE COMPOUND. WHEN COLONEL ALVAREZ WAS TRANSFERRED FROM FUSEP AND APPOINTED AS CHIEF OF THE HONDURAN ARMED FORCES, HE WAS REPLACED (1981-82 TIME FRAME) BY COLONEL DANIEL ((BALI)) CASTILLO. WHILE BALI HAD NOMINAL CONTROL OVER THE SPECIAL UNIT, HERNANDEZ ALSO REPORTED TO AND WORKED INCREASINGLY CLOSELY WITH ALVAREZ IN HIS NEW COMMAND. IN 1982 CAPTAIN HERNANDEZ WAS TRANSFERRED OVERSEAS TO ARGENTINA AND REPLACED BY A HONDURAN ARMY OFFICER, MAJOR LUIS ALONSO ((PADILLA)) DIAZ. UNDER BOTH HERNANDEZ AND PADILLA, THE SPECIAL UNIT WAS RESPONSIVE FIRST TO ALVAREZ AND SECOND TO BALI. IT SEEMED NATURAL THAT ALVAREZ WOULD

[excised]

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[p. 4] SECRET

[excised]

HAVE MAINTAINED A KEEN INTEREST IN THE WELL BEING OF A UNIT WHICH HE HAD HELPED TO GROW FROM ITS INCEPTION. [excised] PERSONALITIES BEING THAT THEY WERE IN HONDURAS, ALVAREZ WOULD HAVE WANTED TO ENSURE HIS BEING ON TOP OF WHAT HAD BECOME AN EFFECTIVE UNIT, WHICH BY THE MIDDLE OF 1983 HAD AN INDETERMINATE MIX OF MILITARY AND POLICE PERSONNEL. ANOTHER POINT WORTH REMEMBERING WAS THAT FUSEP, WHILE A CIVILIAN POLICE ORGANIZATION, WAS DURING THIS TIME FRAME UNDER THE CONTROL OF A MILITARY OFFICER.) WHETHER OR NOT THE SPECIAL UNIT WAS UNDER FUSEP CONTROL WHILE ALVAREZ WAS FUSEP COMMANDER, OR WAS SUBORDINATED IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER TO ALVAREZ WHILE CINC OF ARMED FORCES, THE MISSION OF THE UNIT WAS ESSENTIALLY THE SAME, NAMELY TO COMBAT BOTH DOMESTIC AND REGIONAL SUBVERSIVE MOVEMENTS OPERATING IN AND THROUGH HONDURAS. THIS INCLUDED PENETRATING VARIOUS ORGANIZATION SUCH AS THE HONDURAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCH), THE CENTRAL AMERICAN REGIONAL TROTSKYITE PARTY (PRTCH), AND THE POPULAR REVOLUTIONARY FORCES - LORENZO ZELAYA (FPR-LZ) MARXIST TERRORIST ORGANIZATION.

6. FROM JANUARY UNTIL APRIL 1984, LT. COL. LUIS ALONSO ((DISCUA)) ELVIR, INTEL CHIEF OF THE HONDURAN ARMY GENERAL STAFF, ASSUMED COMMAND OF THE 316TH BATTALION, REPLACING PADILLA. THIS CHANGE IN COMMAND WAS CARRIED OUT BECAUSE OF THE UNIT'S POOR PERFORMANCE DURING THE COMMAND OF PADILLA. [excised] IN APRIL 1984, MAJOR INOCENTE ((BORJAS)) SANTOS BECAME CHIEF OF THE BATTALION AND STAYED WITH THE UNIT UNTIL AT LEAST AUGUST 1986. BORJAS' SUCCESSOR WAS LT. COL. LUIS ALONSO ((VILLATORO)) VILLEDA WHO HEADED THE UNIT UNTIL IT WAS DISBANDED IN 1987. HOWEVER, VILLATORO STAYED WITH THE NEW UNIT UNTIL HE WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE 7TH BATTALION SOMETIME IN EARLY 1989.

7. ACCORDING TO [excised] SOON AFTER THE REMOVAL OF ALVAREZ AS COMMANDER OF THE HONDURAN ARMED FORCES IN

[excised]

SECRET

[p. 5] SECRET

[excised]

MARCH 84, LEFTIST PRESIDENT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN HONDURAS (CODEH) RAMON CUSTODIO)) LOPEZ MET WITH HIGH-LEVEL MILITARY LEADERS AND TOLD THEM THAT THE 316TH MILITARY INTEL BATTALION WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ALMOST ALL PERSONS ON THE CODEH LIST OF MISSING PERSONS. THE MILITARY OFFICERS INVESTIGATED CUSTODIO'S ALLEGATIONS BUT ARGUED THAT THEY FOUND NO EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THEM.

8. IN SEPTEMBER 1987, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE HONDURAN ARMED FORCES, GENERAL HUMBERTO ((REGALADO)) SIGNED AN ORDER DISSOLVING THE 316TH BATTALION. THAT SAME ORDER CREATED THE "COUNTERINTELLIGENCE (CI) DIVISION" OF THE HONDURAN ARMED FORCES. THE CI DIVISION WAS PLACED UNDER THE HONDURAN ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF STAFF FOR INTELLIGENCE (C-S). ALTHOUGH THE CI DIVISION RETAINED SOME OF THE 316TH MILITARY INTEL BATTALION'S FUNCTIONS AND PERSONNEL [excised], A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF THE UNIT'S PERSONNEL, SUB-UNITS AND FUNCTIONS, SUCH AS ANALYSIS CENTERS, WERE TRANSFERRED TO OTHER SECTIONS WITHIN THE C-2.

9. JAMES LEMONYE [MOYNE], A REPORTER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE, WAS THE AUTHOR OF NUMEROUS ARTICLES ON THE SUBJECT OF HONDURAN DEATH SQUAD ACTIVITIES. APPROXIMATELY EVERY SIX MONTHS HE PUBLISHED A NEW ARTICLE WITH A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT TWIST, BUT HIS ARTICLES GENERALLY CONTAINED THE SAME BASIC INFORMATION. BASED ON THESE ARTICLES AND OTHERS WRITTEN ON THE SAME SUBJECT, [excised] WAS ASKED TO ANSWER QUERIES FROM CONGRESS ABOUT [excised] INVOLVEMENT IN, AND KNOWLEDGE OF, ALLEGED HONDURAN DEATH SQUADS DURING THE 1980S. MANY OF THE ALLEGATIONS AGAINST THE 316TH SEEM TO HAVE COME FROM ONE MAN, FLORENCIO ((CABALLERO)) BONILLA (AKA FLORENTINO ((CARBAYO)) BUSTILLO), WHO CLAIMED THE BATTALION WAS TRAINED AND ADVISED ON INTEL MATTERS BY AMERICANS. CABALLERO CLAIMED TO HAVE SERVED IN MILITARY INTEL UNITS FROM 1979 UNTIL 1984 AND TO HAVE BEEN TRAINED BY AMERICANS AND OTHER FOREIGNERS IN INTERROGATION TECHNIQUES. ACCORDING TO CABALLERO, THE AMERICAN ADVISERS DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN INTERROGATIONS OR TORTURE, BUT DID ADVISE ON WHOM TO PUT UNDER SURVEILLANCE AND

[excised]

SECRET

[p. 6] SECRET

[excised]

WHAT QUESTIONS TO ASK THOSE WHO HAD BEEN DETAINED. CABALLERO SAID THE AMERICAN ADVISERS TRIED TO PERSUADE THE HONDURANS TO USE PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESSURES, RATHER THAN PHYSICAL TORTURE, BUT HONDURAN COMMANDERS PREFERRED TO CONTINUE

USING VIOLENT METHODS. CABALLERO CLAIMED THE 316TH KIDNAPPED SUSPECTED LEFTISTS, TOOK THEM TO SECRET DETENTION CENTERS, TORTURED THEM, AND EVENTUALLY KILLED MOST OF THEM. [excised] INDICATE THAT CABALLERO JOINED THE HONDURAN ARMED FORCES IN 1977, AND IN 1979 OR 80 WAS ASSIGNED TO A MILITARY INTEL UNIT. IN 1984 HE DESERTED FROM THE MILITARY, TRAVELED TO MEXICO AND SOUGHT ASYLUM IN CANADA. [excised] HAD NO EVIDENCE TO SUBSTANTIATE CABALLERO'S CLAIMS THAT HE PARTICIPATED IN DEATH SQUAD ACTIVITIES OR IF HE EVEN ACTUALLY SERVED AS AN INTERROGATOR. [excised]

10. THE OTHER PERSON ALLEGING HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES WAS INES CONSUELO ((MURILLO)) SCHWADER, WHO WAS A MEMBER OF THE FPR-LZ, A GROUP THAT WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR SEVERAL BOMBINGS. SHE WAS HELD IN PRISON AND PROBABLY WAS A VICTIM OF ABUSIVE TREATMENT. [excised]

11. [excised] THERE HAD BEEN INFREQUENT ALLEGATIONS MADE AGAINST THE 316TH IN THE LOCAL PRESS BY LEFTISTS AND LEFTIST ORGANIZATIONS. NONE OF THE ARTICLES CONTAINED ANY SPECIFIC ACCUSATIONS OR DETAILS, SIMPLY REFERENCES TO THE 316TH AS A

[excised]

SECRET

[p. 7] SECRET

[excised]

SECRET MILITARY UNIT WHICH HAD ABUSED OR WAS ABUSING HUMAN RIGHTS. OCCASIONALLY IT HAD BEEN REFERRED TO AS A "DEATH SQUAD," HOWEVER, NO DETAILED CHARGES HAD BEEN MADE.

12. IN SUMMARY, [excised] HAD NO PROOF OF ANY DEATH SQUAD ACTIVITIES BY THE 316TH MI BATTALION, NOR OF ANY SPECIFIC ALLEGATIONS OF SUCH ACTIVITIES BY THE 316TH MI BATTALION OR ITS PREDECESSOR ORGANIZATION. THE THRUST OF AVAILABLE INTEL OF DEATH SQUAD ACTIVITIES IN HONDURAS LIMITS SUCH ACTIVITY TO THE 1981-83 TIME FRAME AND PLACES RESPONSIBILITY FOR IT WITH THE ELACH. [excised]

13. [excised]

14. [excised]

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[p. 8] SECRET

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**Appendix Three: *Testifying to Torture*** By James LeMoyne, The New York Times, June 5, 1988, Section 6; Page 45, Column 1; Magazine Desk

HE CAME INTO MY office in San Salvador reeking of the vinegar-tinged sweat of simple human fear. His eyes rolled to show their whites as he insisted that "they" were trying to kill him. He said his name was Florencio Caballero and he wanted to tell me of his work as an interrogator in a Honduran Army death squad, which he said had tortured and then murdered approximately 120 Hondurans and other Latin Americans. He had been trained in Texas by the Central Intelligence Agency, he told me. As a sergeant in the Honduran Army, he said, he had kidnapped and interrogated people, including an American priest, who were then murdered. "Horrible things" had been done to people in dark basements and hidden graveyards.

Intoning his words like a catechism, Mr. Caballero insisted again and again that "the Americans" had trained him not to murder and physically torture people. But once he began working in an army intelligence unit in Honduras, the admonitions of his instructors in Texas were forgotten. He told me he liked and respected his American mentors. But somehow it had all gone wrong, even though it had started well, even though "the Americans" had good ideas. Florencio Caballero wanted me to know that he didn't enjoy torture. He thought murdering prisoners was wrong. He wanted out. But "they," his former army colleagues, he claimed, were trying to kill him for deserting them.

When Mr. Caballero came to see me more than a year ago, the sheer detail and conviction of his emotional account of secret jails, murder and C.I.A. involvement made it seem convincing. But it was the word of only one man, and the Honduran Government denied his charges. It took many more months to find other witnesses, but eventually several American and Honduran officials and a survivor of the army's secret jails confirmed much of Mr. Caballero's story. They gave details of the "horrible things" Mr. Caballero had seen and done, things that neither Honduran nor American citizens would condone if done publicly. "What Caballero says is probably true," I was told by an American official in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras. "It's pretty damaging."

Mr. Caballero told me that a young Honduran woman named Ines Murillo could confirm much of his account - because, he said, she had been a prisoner in a secret army jail near Tegucigalpa where he himself had "interrogated" her and had watched his co-workers torture her. "It was sad to see what they did to her," he told me, shaking his head. "Ines Murillo suffered the most." It took a long time to contact Ms. Murillo. After managing a remarkable release from a secret jail in 1984, she fled from Honduras to exile. She admits that at the time of her capture in Honduras she was a member of an underground Marxist guerrilla group that carried out bombings - and robberies to raise funds for their revolutionary goals. In spite of her strong political beliefs, she does not appear to be a propagandist. She has not sought out journalists, and she has refused to write a book about her experience.

As she spoke of her torture, in a five-hour interview in Mexico, Ines Murillo seemed to serve as a kind of witness for the tens of thousands of people who have "disappeared" in Latin America and for the dozens of victims of official death squads I personally have seen in six years of reporting in Central America. Their slashed, bullet-pocked, sometimes raped and dismembered bodies showed - but could not speak of - the terror that had befallen them. But Ms. Murillo could speak.

"Since I was blindfolded, I got to know my torturers by their smells and by the way they breathed," Ms. Murillo told me. "They were all men. Some used cheap cologne. One had a sinus condition that gave a nasal sound to his respiration."

Her worst torturer was known as "Rony," a man Mr. Caballero says is actually a Honduran Army lieutenant, Marco Tulio Regalado, who denies the charge. Rony would remain silent as he tortured her, Ms. Murillo said. "He terrified me because he was the cruelest. When I heard the door of my cell open, I would listen for his voice. If it was him I would prepare myself, because I

knew I was about to be hurt again," she said. "I told him, when I finally left prison, that I would never forget what he had done to me."

Only an occasional shudder or tear, usually when she recalled watching someone else being hurt, betrayed what Ms. Murillo felt five years after being beaten, electrically shocked, burned, starved, exposed, threatened, stripped naked and sexually molested for 80 days. She said Mr. Caballero was one of her torturers, a word he never used to describe the "interrogation" he carried out on a bound and naked woman.

Like Mr. Caballero, Ines Murillo impressed me as a direct, credible witness. Each lent strong support to the other's account. Piece by piece, it gradually became clear that their story offered a unique window through which to view the most primitive and bitter level of the struggle between political change and maintenance of state power now under way in Central America. Other Latin-American Governments, particularly those of Guatemala, El Salvador and Argentina, have killed many more people than has the Honduran Government. But the accounts of Ms. Murillo and Mr. Caballero, along with evidence drawn from a unique lawsuit brought against Honduras by the relatives of four people who "disappeared" (box on page 64), provide a remarkably complete and disturbingly human picture of how the cycle of failed reform, guerrilla pressure and answering official repression begins, not just in Honduras, but in much of Latin America.

The weight of evidence indicates that between 1980 and 1984 the Honduran Army, with American support, uncovered and then systematically wiped out much of the small Honduran guerrilla movement, as well as other rebel networks within Honduras supporting Salvadoran leftist guerrillas and the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. During those years in Honduras, there were no trials or lawyers to defend the accused. It was a period of rationally directed state terror against an identified enemy who was also willing to kill to change the system of government.

The victims were not all Hondurans. Around the time Ms. Murillo was seized, Florencio Caballero said, he interrogated an American priest, Father James Carney, who supported guerrilla warfare and was captured along with a group of 96 rebels who had infiltrated into Honduras from Nicaragua after training in Cuba. Mr. Caballero said Father Carney and nearly 70 of the captured guerrillas were executed. His account was seconded by a Honduran officer. American officials have long contended that Father Carney and other rebels died of "exposure" or in combat.

The American Ambassador at the time, John D. Negroponte, who is now deputy assistant to the President for national security affairs, recently said through a spokesman that he tried strongly to encourage respect for human rights in Honduras. According to American officials who served there, Mr. Negroponte did privately protest some of the worst abuses, and embassy human-rights reports of the period note a few of the most egregious cases. But in the main, the Americans appear to have helped organize an army intelligence machine they could not control, or perhaps did not want to control. American officials who spoke to me about these matters seemed deeply troubled by the political and moral meaning they held. Their concern is a reflection of decades of American uncertainty - and, possibly, guilt - over the use of United States power in Latin America.

"The C.I.A. knew what was going on, and the Ambassador complained sometimes. But most of the time they'd look the other way," said one American official who, like almost all officials quoted in this article, spoke on the condition that he not be named. The C.I.A. refused to comment on the events described here, saying through a spokesman that the agency would not comment "on intelligence matters."

THE PRACTICE OF "disappearing" people is probably the most sordid invention of modern Latin American politics. In countries that like to boast of their humanity in abolishing the death penalty, secretly executing people without trial has become a disease. It is an especially cruel measure because families never know with certainty what has happened to their loved ones. According to leading human-rights groups, during the last two decades a number of Governments - Argentina,

Uruguay, Chile, Paraguay, Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico have secretly killed as many as 100,000 of their people.

Political events at the time in Honduras and in neighboring El Salvador and Nicaragua help explain the brutality - and a degree of official American complicity in its development. When the Reagan Administration came into office in 1981, ending the guerrilla war in El Salvador was high on its agenda. Honduras, an utterly impoverished country situated between El Salvador and Nicaragua, quickly became a key base for American efforts in the region. Administration officials vowed to cut off arms they said were being sent from Nicaragua to the Salvadoran rebels. In fact, several weapons shipments from Nicaragua were intercepted in Honduras between 1980 and 1982. At the same time, the Reagan Administration was preparing to use Honduras to launch the contra guerrilla war against the Sandinistas.

By the beginning of 1981, according to American and Honduran officials, the C.I.A. had helped bring Argentine Army officers to Honduras to train the contras and Honduran intelligence units. The Argentines were led by Col. Osvaldo Ribeiro, who, a Honduran officer said, had learned and practiced secret murder during the "dirty war" in the mid-1970's, in which an estimated 12,000 or more Argentines "disappeared" in a state-directed campaign of elimination known in Central America as "the Argentine method." At the same time, according to American and Honduran officials, the C.I.A. pushed for the rapid rise of a Honduran Army colonel, Gustavo Alvarez Martinez.

Colonel Alvarez, a vitriolic anti-Communist who had been trained in Argentina, became head of the police in 1980. He soon formed a death squad, according to American and Honduran officials. He was helped by a younger officer named Alexander Hernandez - who Mr. Caballero claims was his commander in the death squads.

Honduran officials say that the Americans could have had little doubt about Colonel Alvarez's bloody record. American officials, however, felt Alvarez was just the man needed to deal with spreading Communist subversion. Ambassador Negroponte warned me in an interview in 1983 that "Marxist guerrillas are organizing here," and went on to say that Alvarez was a hard man but an effective officer.

Even so, as far back as 1982, the former head of Honduran military intelligence, Col. Leonidas Torres Arias, held a press conference in Mexico to condemn Alvarez and Hernandez as killers. They had "a madness to physically annihilate and disappear, as they have already done, all those who do not share their radical ideas," Col. Torres Arias said. Alvarez would lead Honduras to ruin, he warned.

In 1982, with strong American encouragement, Honduras's newly-elected civilian President, Roberto Suazo Cordova, promoted Alvarez to general and named him commander of the army. Even before his promotion, Alvarez was organizing a new army intelligence unit with C.I.A. support, which would be known as Battalion 316. Sgt. Florencio Caballero, who had already received American training, says he was among the first of those recruited to serve in the new unit.

"I was taken to Texas with 24 others for six months between 1979 and 1980," Mr. Caballero told me. "There was an American Army captain there and men from the C.I.A. The chief C.I.A. instructor was 'Mr. Bill.'" Mr. Bill had served in Vietnam, Mr. Caballero said. He believes he was killed in Beirut in 1983, when the United States Embassy there was bombed.

In Texas, said Mr. Caballero, the Americans "taught me interrogation, in order to end physical torture in Honduras. They taught us psychological methods - to study the fears and weaknesses of a prisoner. Make him stand up, don't let him sleep, keep him naked and isolated, put rats and cockroaches in his cell, give him bad food, serve him dead animals, throw cold water on him, change the temperature.

"When I returned to Honduras, I was trained in assaults, bombs and explosives by Americans, Chileans and Argentines," Mr. Caballero recalled. "Then I joined an intelligence unit as an interrogator. We seized and investigated subversives."

Occasionally, an American C.I.A. agent visited the hidden jail where he worked, Mr. Caballero says, and was given edited interrogation reports on prisoners. It is unclear how much he knew of the torture. "The Americans didn't accept physical torture, they didn't accept kidnapping - they said to arrest people using a judicial order," Mr. Caballero said. "But guerrillas don't wait there with a pen to sign a judicial order. Our commander ordered us to kill them. We hid people from the Americans, interrogated them, then gave them to a death squad to kill."

According to two Hondurans who know him well, General Alvarez gave the order to execute leftists after a series of kidnappings, bombings and other violent attacks by leftist guerrillas in Honduras between 1980 and 1982. These rebel actions infuriated Alvarez, according to the two Hondurans. "He decided that was enough," said one of them. "Alvarez said the court system was too weak - that it would not be possible to jail and hold guerrillas without facing constant hijackings and kidnappings to force their release. He decided it was time to kill them all before they got stronger in Honduras." It is a conclusion that has been reached by several armies and governments in Latin America.

INES MURILLO ENTERED Honduras's secret jails on March 13, 1983, when a Honduran Army death squad seized her and a friend in the northern town of Choloma. She was 24 years old. Ms. Murillo admits she used a false name and carried false documents, because she was, in fact, an underground organizer and spy for a Honduran Marxist guerrilla group known as the Lorenzo Zelaya Popular Revolutionary Command. But she says that even as a guerrilla preparing to attack the army, she believes she had the right to a trial and jail, rather than secret torture and death.

She says her disappearance began when assailants forced her into a truck, blindfolded her and then raced through the night to a secret army jail in the basement of a residential house in the town of San Pedro Sula. Mr. Caballero remembered Ms. Murillo as a remarkably tough prisoner. She herself says she refused to give even her name for 10 days, in an effort to protect her family and give her comrades in the underground time to hide. The torture began immediately. Her kidnapers threw her into a small basement cell, she says, stripped her naked and demanded that she tell them about her work as "a subversive."

"Tell us your name, tell us about your organization, your subversive activities, your training in Cuba, your friends, your family, tell us everything," a man said to her, slapping her down to the floor.

"I laughed in his face," Ms. Murillo recalls. "I was determined to die if necessary. I was not going to talk." The reply infuriated her interrogator. She heard him unzip his pants. He put his penis next to her genitals and said: "Look whore, I'm not kidding. I can have 50 men visit you tonight. This is no joke."

He did not rape her, she says. Instead, he began to torture her methodically with electric shocks. The device he used, he informed her, was a light cord that he had cut to expose the two bare wires at the end. He would plug the cord into the wall and stick the two live wires on her body until she talked, he said.

"They stuck the wires on me and I screamed and fell down from the shock," she says. "The screams just escape from you. They taped my mouth and held me up. Two men held me, the third shocked me. They hit me all over my body."

For the first time in an hour of talking, a tear escapes from Ms. Murillo's eyes as she remembers. "I smelled smoke and realized I was burning from the singes of the shocks. They said they would torture me until I went mad. I didn't believe them. But then they spread my legs and stuck the wires on my genitals."

"I blamed myself for not forcing them to kill me when they captured me," she says, recalling the moment. "I'd always promised myself that I would die instead of letting them take me alive. And now I wished I was dead."

In 1983, during the months that Ms. Murillo was imprisoned and tortured, she says an American official periodically visited her secret jail, confirming an account first given to me by Mr. Caballero almost a year earlier. Because she was blindfolded, she never saw him. The American was never there when she was tortured, Ms. Murillo says, supporting Mr. Caballero's explanation that the rule was to conceal gross torture and murder from the C.I.A. But Ms. Murillo says she does not believe the C.I.A. could fail to have known what was going on.

"Here comes the American," Ms. Murillo recalls her guards saying. "They cleaned the cell, dressed me and then someone entered and walked up behind me. I heard a pen writing on paper and then a Honduran said: 'Tell us about how you were trained in Cuba.' But he made a grammatical mistake in the question - I think because he was reading what the American had handed him on paper."

After 35 days in her first jail, in San Pedro Sula, Ms. Murillo was moved to a second hidden prison near Tegucigalpa, where Mr. Caballero says he repeatedly "interrogated" her. There, her torture became more refined. Both she and Mr. Caballero say American-style "psychological" methods were then the preferred form. Ms. Murillo says Mr. Caballero and other interrogators gave her raw dead birds and rats for dinner, threw freezing water on her naked body every half hour for extended periods and made her stand for hours without sleep and without being allowed to urinate.

She remembers hearing other prisoners confess. She heard a man screaming while being clubbed - she believes, to death. A young Salvadoran prisoner named Roger had been beaten so badly his leg bone was exposed. He was taken away one day, and never returned.

"I didn't cry," she says. "I told other women prisoners that in here it's the law of the jungle. The strong survive."

Not only strength, but the perseverance of her family seem to have saved Ms. Murillo's life. Her father, Cesar Augusto Murillo, once served in a branch of the Honduran military, where he met many officers. Ms. Murillo says that when she finally broke under torture, she told her captors her real name. One of them immediately said: "My God, I know your father." But the torture continued.

Mr. Murillo spared no effort trying to find his daughter. He guessed that she was in a secret jail and, according to Ms. Murillo, let it be known he would pay for information on her whereabouts. A soldier contacted him and, for a bribe, told him where his daughter was held. The soldier, Ms. Murillo says, also revealed the name and phone number of a man the informant said was the C.I.A. agent who visited the secret jail.

According to Ms. Murillo, her father told senior Honduran and American officials that he would publish the information if his daughter was not released. His threat seemed to have worked. Eighty days after she was seized, Ms. Murillo's captors suddenly took her to a Honduran court. The judge quickly reincarcerated her as a common detainee in a regular jail. She knew that being placed in a public prison meant she had been allowed to live. She was never convicted of any crime, she says, and about 13 months later was allowed to go into exile.

Through several sources, I learned the name of the American suspected of being the C.I.A. officer. When asked, the C.I.A. would not comment on whether the man worked for the agency, or on whether any of its agents ever visited secret jails in Honduras. Several Honduran and American officials, however, say that the American was a C.I.A. officer and that he was sent out of Honduras shortly after his identity and, perhaps, his work were revealed.

IN 1974, AFTER SEVERAL Latin American police forces trained by the United States had been accused of torture and killing, Congress cut off all American financial assistance for training foreign policemen, although it allowed the C.I.A. to maintain contacts with police forces. In 1985, Honduras, along with El Salvador, was given a special waiver, which permitted American military aid to its police and intelligence units.

Both General Alvarez and now Colonel Hernandez have denied charges of involvement in human-rights abuses. But the American Government last year held up police aid to Honduras because of the controversy surrounding Hernandez's role in police training. In January, during an unprecedented appearance by a military officer before the Inter-American Court on Human Rights, Colonel Hernandez denied that he was Caballero's commander. Caballero had previously testified, as had Ines Murillo.

Human-rights advocates argue that the record shows that with American training the Honduran police became more efficient, but not more respectful of human rights, and that aid should be cut off. American officials reply that the United States should keep training Hondurans, in what they term a slow effort to reform them and maintain some influence over them. It is a controversial issue that exposes the strong tension between American concern for human rights and the political pragmatism of a powerful nation whose interests and ideology encourage it to influence and sometimes utilize police forces in other countries. It is unlikely that the police in a country like Honduras will respond temperately to guerrillas who are willing to kill to force change. When the United States Government trains policemen in Latin America, it is almost always training men who will carry out at least some human-rights abuses. They do so because they believe they are in a fight to the death with guerrillas.

Some American officials, as well as several Honduran military officers I talked to, expressed a frank willingness to use power to achieve political goals, even if people are killed. The elimination of suspected leftists in Honduras was perhaps unfortunate, they said. But they argued that it was limited in scope - and it "worked." The guerrilla networks were destroyed, they contended, and the Government was given a chance to improve its performance and win public support before new guerrillas gained a foothold.

Perhaps the Government did win a breathing space. But there are signs that the torture and killing committed by the army may not "work" in the long run in Honduras. The country remains one of the poorest in Latin America. Malnutrition is the chief cause of death. The civilian Government remains painfully incompetent and dominated by an army that has now had the experience of consciously choosing to kill secretly its suspected opponents.

Today there are a number of influential soldiers and officers in Honduran military intelligence who have themselves either tortured and murdered, or given the order for others to do so. They were told that such killing was not a crime, but a duty to preserve national security. That is an experience that corrupts men.

Florencio Caballero, now a refugee living in Canada, says he no longer thinks the official killing "worked." He says he watched his fellow soldiers slowly lose all sense of morality and discipline as they tortured people and ordered their deaths.

Ines Murillo says her experience has convinced her not to return to Honduras as a guerrilla. But she, too, doubts the repression there "worked." After hours of talking, her voice became hard:

"The enemy has taught me that you have to be very cold, very rational, very ordered. Between 100 and 150 of us have been killed. They killed very beautiful, decent people who cared for our country. But there will always be people as crazy as me, willing to fight. War will come. We will learn, as you keep hitting us, and we will become hardened and very, very tough. We will see a damned gringo American and we will blast him."

She paused to consider the raw words that had rushed from her. "These are ugly things," Ms. Murillo said quietly, with what seemed resignation that held no loss of conviction. "But they will come - you Americans are making them come. To understand this has caused me torture. It has cost me tears."

It may be that Ms. Murillo is wrong, that her judgment is swayed by her ideology and by the anger, mourning and hate she feels after being tortured and having friends killed. And it may also be that having experimented with state terror, Honduras will now rethink and change its ways.

Or it may be that Ms. Murillo and Mr. Caballero are right. It may be not only that state terror did not "work" in Honduras, but that it marked the beginning there of the cycle of failed reform and repression that already afflicts much of the rest of Latin America.

#### FOUR WHO 'DISAPPEARED'

In April 1986, relatives of four suspected victims of the Honduran Army death squads brought a suit against Honduras in the Inter-American Court on Human Rights. Honduras is the first country to be tried by the court on charges of sanctioning the secret murder of its citizens, in part because it is one of the few to recognize fully the court's jurisdiction. Honduran officials privately say they feel it is not fair for Honduras to be singled out when many other Latin American governments have committed far more human-rights abuses. But they have accepted the court's right to try the case, and have so far been unable to give a convincing explanation of the fate of the missing.

Two of those who disappeared in Honduras, and whose families are parties in the suit, are Francisco Fairen Garbi and Yolanda del Carmen Solis Corrales. The two young Costa Ricans left their home in San Jose on Dec. 8, 1981, reportedly intending to drive a borrowed car to Mexico, by way of the Pan-American Highway. Immigration records show they entered Nicaragua on Dec. 9, and left Nicaragua, driving across the border into Honduras, on Dec. 11. There the trail ends. Mr. Fairen and Ms. Solis disappeared somewhere in Honduras, and have not been seen since.

Their parents cannot understand why anyone would harm their children. But it may be that they were caught bringing guns into Honduras. Nobody can explain where Mr. Fairen managed to borrow a car to drive to Mexico. According to a Honduran human-rights investigator, Mr. Fairen was involved in left-wing student politics, and he made his trip at a time when guns were being shipped from Costa Rica and Nicaragua to guerrillas in Honduras and El Salvador. A Honduran with extremely close ties to the military contends that when Mr. Fairen drove into Honduras, soldiers found the car loaded with weapons. The Honduran says Mr. Fairen and Ms. Solis were "interrogated" and then killed.

In sworn testimony to the Inter-American Court, Mr. Caballero said he had seen Mr. Fairen's name on a list of kidnapped people kept by the army intelligence unit he worked for. Ms. Solis's name was not listed, he said.

The Honduran Government at first denied that Mr. Fairen and Ms. Solis ever entered Honduras. Later, the Government said Ms. Solis had entered Honduras alone, driving a car. Her mother, Florinda Corrales, says her daughter never learned to drive.

Francisco Fairen Armengol, the father of Francisco Fairen Garbi, went to Honduras in 1982 to look for his son. He says he was shown a photo of the body of a young man left by the roadside, shot dead and partially unclothed.

"I was convinced by the photo - it looked like him," Mr. Fairen Armengol said quietly. "He had been shot three times in the neck, and his face was beaten. I looked for his body, but they told me it was in a public grave. No one knew where he was buried."

The photo of the dead young man was taken 17 days after immigration records show that Mr. Fairen drove into Honduras, a time lag that gives his father nightmares. "They had him in jail for 17 days," he says. "Seventeen days of torture, waiting for death." Angel Manfredo Velasquez, a 35-year-old Honduran schoolteacher, was seized by armed men in Tegucigalpa in September 1981. Jose Saul Godinez Cruz, a 32-year-old teacher, disappeared in July 1982 in Choluteca, Honduras. Their families are also suing the Honduran Government.

Mr. Caballero told the Inter-American court that he saw the names of both men listed on the record of people kidnapped by his intelligence unit. He testified that a fellow death-squad member, Lieut. Flores Murillo, told him that Mr. Velasquez had been killed and his body cut into pieces to prevent identification.

Last January, two important witnesses in the case against Honduras were gunned down on Honduran streets.

One of those killed was Miguel Angel Pavon, a moderate man who was a leading member of the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in Honduras. Before he was murdered, Mr. Pavon had been the first witness to testify against the Honduran Government.

"The fear, which has not yet disappeared, was very great in past years, because all knew who was responsible," Mr. Pavon had told the court. "It was a systematic, constant policy - carried out by the top military commanders."

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**Appendix Four: A Carefully Crafted Deception** By Gary Cohn and Ginger Thompson, Baltimore Sun, June 18, 1995

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras -- A dangerous truth confronted John Dimitri Negro Ponte as he prepared to take over as U.S. ambassador to Honduras late in 1981.

The military in Honduras -- the country from which the Reagan administration had decided to run the battle for democracy in Central America -- was kidnapping and murdering its own citizens.

"GOH [Government of Honduras] security forces have begun to resort to extralegal tactics -- disappearances and, apparently, physical eliminations -- to control a perceived subversive threat," Negro Ponte was told in a secret briefing book prepared by the embassy staff.

The assertion was true, and there was worse to come.

Time and again during his tour of duty in Honduras from 1981 to 1985, Negro Ponte was confronted with evidence that a Honduran army intelligence unit, trained by the CIA, was stalking, kidnapping, torturing and killing suspected subversives.

A 14-month investigation by The Sun, which included interviews with U.S. and Honduran officials who could not have spoken freely at the time, shows that Negro Ponte learned from numerous sources about the crimes of the unit called Battalion 316.

The Honduran press was full of reports about military abuses, including hundreds of newspaper stories in 1982 alone. There were also direct pleas from Honduran officials to U.S. officials, including Negro Ponte.

A disgruntled former Honduran intelligence chief publicly denounced Battalion 316. Relatives of the battalion's victims demonstrated in the streets and appealed to U.S. officials for intervention, including once in an open letter to President Reagan's presidential envoy to Central America.

Rick Chidester, then a junior political officer in the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa, told The Sun that he compiled substantial evidence of abuses by the Honduran military in 1982, but was ordered to delete most of it from the annual human rights report prepared for the State Department to deliver to Congress. [Editor's note: Chidester subsequently claimed the Baltimore Sun had misquoted him.]

Those reports consistently misled Congress and the public.

"There are no political prisoners in Honduras," the State Department asserted falsely in its 1983 human rights report.

The reports to Congress were carefully crafted to convey the impression that the Honduran government and military were committed to democratic ideals.

It was important not to confront Congress with evidence that the military was trampling on civil liberties and murdering dissidents. The truth could have triggered congressional action under the Foreign Assistance Act, which generally prohibits military aid to any government that "engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights."

Fact vs. fiction

A comparison of the annual human rights reports prepared while Negro Ponte was ambassador with the facts as they were then known shows that Congress was deliberately misled.

Assertion: "Student, worker, peasant, and other interest groups have full freedom to organize and hold frequent public demonstrations without interference. ... Trade unions are not hindered by the government."

-- State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1982

Fact: Highly publicized abductions of students and union leaders that year included:

Saul Godinez, elementary school teacher and union activist, abducted July 22, 1982; Eduardo Lanza, medical student and general secretary of the Honduran Federation of University Students, kidnapped Aug. 1, 1982; German Perez Aleman, leader of an airport maintenance workers union, abducted Aug. 18, 1982; Hector Hernandez, president of a textile workers union, abducted Dec. 24, 1982.

All are still missing and presumed dead.

Assertion: "Legal guarantees exist against arbitrary arrest or imprisonment, and against torture or degrading treatment. Habeas corpus is guaranteed by the Constitution, and Honduran law provides for arraignment within 24 hours of arrest. This appears to be the standard practice."

-- State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1982

Fact: "The court got so many petitions of habeas corpus. But whenever we sent them to the police, the police would say they did not have the prisoners," Rumaldo Iries Calix, a justice of the Supreme Court in 1982, said in an interview with The Sun. "They had moved the prisoners to some secret jail. It was like a game to them."

The experience of Zenaida Velasquez was typical. Her brother, Manfredo, a 35-year-old graduate student, teacher and political activist, was abducted by Battalion 316 on Sept. 12, 1981, and has not been seen since.

Zenaida Velasquez filed habeas corpus petitions on her brother's behalf on Sept. 17, 1981, Feb. 6, 1982, and July 4, 1983, asking that he be brought before a court and his detention justified.

"It didn't do any good at all," she said.

Assertion: "There have been reports in the press and by local sources of the use of torture by local police forces during interrogation. Honduran officials assert that it is a common practice for persons held in connection with politically motivated crimes to allege that they were tortured during the investigation and interrogation process."

"The Honduran armed forces chief, Gustavo Alvarez, recently issued a public statement denying that the government used torture and specifically stated that torture was not to be used on prisoners."

-- State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1982

Fact: Alvarez had made it clear to Ambassador Negroponte's predecessor, Jack Binns, that he intended to use Argentine-style, "extra-legal" means to eliminate suspected subversives. Battalion 316 was created largely for this purpose.

According to Florencio Caballero, a former sergeant in Battalion 316, Alvarez demanded torture as "the quickest way to get information."

In one highly publicized case of torture and intimidation, human rights attorney Rene Velasquez (no relation to Manfredo) was arrested on June 1, 1982, in front of his law office in Tegucigalpa and taken to a secret jail where he was kept for four days.

"They undressed me, they tied my hands and they put a rubber mask over my face," he said. "They put something on me to attract flies, because those were my companions for four days.

"I was beaten a lot," Rene Velasquez said. "They hit me in the ribs and stomach. ... I could barely endure the pain."

Assertion: "Access to prisoners is generally not a problem for relatives, attorneys, consular officers or international humanitarian organizations."

-- State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1982

Fact: Not only were they denied access, dozens of relatives of the "disappeared" told The Sun, but police would not even tell them if or where their relatives were being held.

Fidelina Perez and Natalia Mendez visited every police station in Tegucigalpa after finding out that their sons, who were student leaders, had been arrested on a bus as it crossed the border from Nicaragua on Jan. 24, 1982.

Their sons have not been seen since and are presumed dead.

"[The police] all said they had no information. They had not seen them," Perez said. "The police told us to go and look for them in Cuba or Nicaragua."

Said Mendez: "They told us, why did we keep looking for them when they were already dead?"

Assertion: "Sanctity of the home is guaranteed by the Constitution and generally observed."

-- State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1982.

Fact: Raids of homes without warrants were common in Honduras. The military stormed neighborhoods in search of Communist safe houses.

"They would burst into homes of people who were completely innocent and search for evidence," said Honduran journalist Noe Leyva. "Sometimes if they found Marxist books or pamphlets, they would arrest the resident without any warrant. It was ridiculous."

Leyva, now an editor at the Honduran newspaper El Tiempo, reported on human rights abuses for that newspaper in the early 1980s.

In July 1982, Oscar Reyes, a prominent journalist, was seized from his home along with his wife in an illegal raid. Upon their release from prison, the Reyeses found their home ransacked.

Assertion: "In rare cases in which members of the security forces have been accused of murder, the government has brought the perpetrators to justice."

-- State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1983

Fact: "I don't recall one case of that," said Edmundo Orellana, the Honduran attorney general.

Rumaldo Iries Calix, the former Honduran Supreme Court justice, said charges sometimes would be brought against low-level officers, but that the cases were always dismissed.

"No judge dared to convict a military official," Iries said. "There was so much repression against anyone who opposed the military."

Assertion: "There are no political prisoners in Honduras. Individuals are prosecuted not for their political beliefs but rather for criminal acts defined in the penal code."

-- State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1983

Fact: Orellana, who is investigating the disappearances of Battalion 316's victims, shakes his head in amazement at that assertion.

"This is totally untrue," he said. "There were political prisoners, and the disappeared are the proof. They followed, arrested and executed people who just thought differently."

One senator who was serving at the time as a member of the Senate intelligence committee describes what difference it might have made if the human rights reporting had been more truthful.

"I think its extremely important that the State Department be right on human rights, said Sen. Patrick J. Leahy, a Vermont Democrat. "If we told the truth about Honduras and the whole Central American policy, ... billions of American tax dollars would have been saved, a large number of lives would have been saved, and the governments would have moved toward democracy quicker."

Negroponete replies

Negroponete, now U.S. ambassador to the Philippines, has declined repeated requests by telephone and in writing since July for interviews about this report. However, on Thursday, after publication of three parts of The Sun's series, he issued a written statement:

"Under my leadership, the embassy worked to promote the restoration and consolidation of democracy in Honduras, including the advancement of human rights."

He added, "At no time during my tenure in Honduras did the embassy condone or conceal human rights violations. To the contrary, the embassy and the State Department cooperated with the government of Honduras to help remedy recognized deficiencies in the administration of justice."

Negroponete's arrival in Honduras coincided with the Reagan administration's decision to reduce the emphasis that the Carter administration had put on rights issues in dealings with allies.

The new policy had been made clear to Negroponete's predecessor, Ambassador Binns, a Carter appointee, after he repeatedly warned of human rights abuses by the Honduran military.

In a June 1981 cable obtained by The Sun, Binns reported:

"I am deeply concerned at increasing evidence of officially sponsored/sanctioned assassinations of political and criminal targets, which clearly indicate [Government of Honduras] repression has built up a head of steam much faster than we had anticipated."

The reaction was swift and unexpected. Binns was summoned to Washington by Thomas O. Enders, the new assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs.

"I was told to stop human rights reporting except in back channel. The fear was that if it came into the State Department, it will leak," Binns recalled. "They wanted to keep assistance flowing. Increased violations by the Honduran military would prejudice that."

"Back channel" messages are unofficial or informal communications, often in code, sent outside the usual distribution system to restrict circulation of information.

Enders confirmed the 1981 meeting with Binns.

"I told him that whereas human rights violations had been the single most important focus of the previous administration's policy in Latin America, the Reagan administration had broader interests," Enders said. "It believed that the most effective way to overcome civil conflicts and human rights violations was to promote democratically elected governments and that should be his point of focus."

Ample evidence of abuses

There was nothing rare or vague about the evidence of military abuses that confronted Negro Ponte from the time he took over as ambassador in November 1981.

In 1982, his first full year in Honduras, more than 300 articles in the local press included:

An account in February of the discovery of five bodies in a makeshift grave in Las Montanitas, 15 miles outside Tegucigalpa.

\* An account in April of the illegal arrest of six university students.

\* A story in September about union members marching through Tegucigalpa to demand the release of one of their leaders abducted a month earlier.

\* Another story in September about dozens of children protesting the disappearances outside the Honduran Congress as it considered forming a committee to investigate military abuses.

"There is no way United States officials in Honduras during the early 1980s can deny they knew about the disappearances," said Jaime Rosenthal, a former vice president of Honduras and owner of the daily newspaper El Tiempo. "There were stories about it in our newspaper and most other newspapers almost every day."

"[The United States] had an embassy staff here that was larger than most other embassies in Latin America," Rosenthal said. "If they say they did not know, that is bad, because it would mean they were incompetent."

Evidence came from other sources.

Efrain Diaz Arrivillaga, then a delegate in the Honduran Congress and a voice of dissent in the prevailing atmosphere of intimidation, said he spoke several times to Negro Ponte about the military's human rights abuses.

Diaz said that in meetings at the U.S. Embassy and at social occasions, he rebuked Negro Ponte for the U.S. government's refusal to take a stand against the repression.

The Honduran legislator said Negro Ponte reproached him for refusing to take a strong stand against Communists who were trying to seize control of Honduras.

"I remember Negro Ponte told me, 'You and others, what you are proposing is to let communism take over this country and over the region,' " Diaz said.

"The most important thing to him was to win public support for the presence of the U.S. military in Honduras," Diaz said. "Their [the U.S.] attitude was one of tolerance and silence. They needed Honduras to loan its territory more than they were concerned about innocent people being killed."

Accusations against the military also came from former insiders.

In August 1982, Col. Leonidas Torres Arias, ousted chief of intelligence for the Honduran military, issued a public warning about Battalion 316. In a news conference in Mexico City, he told reporters about "a death squad operating in Honduras led by armed forces chief General Gustavo Alvarez."

The story made headlines in Mexico and across Central America. A reporter from the Honduran newspaper *El Tiempo* asked Negro Ponte about the colonel's allegations.

Said Negro Ponte in an article that appeared Oct. 16, 1982: "Democracy is being consolidated in this country. The armed forces have supported that process. It was the armed forces that turned over power to the civilian constitutional leaders of Honduras. So, I have a lot of difficulty taking those kinds of accusations seriously."

The evidence was also to be found in the streets of Tegucigalpa.

Each week, hundreds marched through the streets of the capital demanding the release of the disappeared. Sometimes they marched past the U.S. Embassy, a hulking concrete complex on Paz Avenue.

The Committee of the Relatives of the Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH) turned to the U.S. government for help. On June 13, 1983, COFADEH addressed an open letter to Richard Stone, President Reagan's special envoy to Central America, complaining that the Honduran military was holding dissidents in clandestine jails.

"More than 40 people have been illegally arrested and tortured," the letter said. "Some have never been heard from since their arrest."

The letter was published in *El Tiempo*, one of the largest newspapers in Honduras. The U.S. government never responded to the committee's pleas.

In an interview, Stone said that he did not recall the letter.

Spurned at the embassy

In October 1983, members of COFADEH visited the U.S. Embassy to ask for help. They said they met with Scott Thayer, a junior political officer assigned to monitor human rights. Among the relatives who attended was Bertha Oliva, whose husband, Tomas Nativi, had been missing for more than two years.

Also there was Zenaida Velasquez, whose brother, Manfredo, had been missing for more than two years.

The parents of Eduardo Lanza attended. Lanza, a medical student, had been a prominent student leader when he was kidnapped by Battalion 316 in August 1982.

The group told Thayer that they had searched jails and hospitals across Honduras for their missing relatives, that military officials only laughed at them and that judges were too afraid to help. They begged the embassy to use its influence with Honduran officials to win their relatives' freedom.

Zenaida Velasquez remembers that Thayer listened politely, then dismissed their allegations.

"He said he knew Honduras had a democratic government and [that] those kinds of practices were not going on," Velasquez said. "They were such a bunch of liars it was disgusting."

Thayer, now a political officer at the U.S. Embassy in Madrid, Spain, said that meeting with Hondurans about human rights abuses "was part of my job. I recall having meetings like that, but I can't recall that specific meeting."

Oliva still fumes over the meeting. In an interview in Tegucigalpa, she said that the embassy official acted as if they were fabricating the disappearances of their relatives.

"He was very cold, very cold," she said, pursing her lips. "Any kindness was gone. He did not even smile at us."

Roberto Becerra, father of the student Eduardo Lanza, said he came away from the meeting with a hopeless feeling.

"We felt like we were screaming in the desert. No one heard us. No one would help us."

In at least one case, Negroponete was confronted with evidence of abuse that he could not ignore -- the arrest and torture in July 1982 of journalist Oscar Reyes and his wife, Gloria.

Reyes, a founder of the journalism school at the National Autonomous University of Honduras, was openly sympathetic to the Marxist Sandinistas in Nicaragua and had written numerous newspaper columns criticizing the Honduran military.

The abduction of the Reyeses sparked newspaper stories and raucous student protests. The Reyeses said they were locked in secret cell for a week, and beaten and tortured with electric shocks.

At the U.S. Embassy, there was fear that if the story got to the United States it might damage carefully assembled public support for the Central America program operating out of Honduras.

Cresencio S. Arcos, then the embassy press spokesman, alerted Negroponete that the Honduran military had abducted the Reyeses.

"If they do this guy, then we're in trouble," Arcos warned. "We cannot let this guy get hurt. ... It would be a disaster for our policy."

"The ambassador did approach [General] Alvarez about this to manifest his concern," Arcos said.

The case clearly shows that Negroponete knew of the Reyeses' abduction and that the ambassador acted in such cases when he felt compelled to do so.

Reyes and his wife were released from the clandestine jail after a week. They were taken before a public court and sentenced to six months in prison. Two weeks before their sentences ended, they were allowed to leave for the United States on condition that they keep quiet about the torture they endured.

That condition was laid down personally by Alvarez, said the Reyeses, who now live in Vienna, Va.

The U.S. Embassy also kept quiet publicly about the Reyes case. It was not mentioned in the human rights report for 1982, even though it was widely covered in the Honduran press and illustrated the Honduran military's violation of human rights on several counts: illegal abduction, secret incarceration, torture and suppression of press freedom.

Instead, the 1982 report asserted: "No incident of official interference with the media has been recorded for several years."

Inside the embassy

Negroponte's aides at the embassy told The Sun that they knew about serious human rights abuses by the Honduran military, and that the violence was a subject of constant discussion.

One of those aides was a junior political officer, Rick Chidester, who was assigned in 1982 to gather information for the embassy's annual report on human rights, a task that usually fell to a junior officer.

Chidester, now 43 and a private businessman, said that while in Honduras, he interviewed human rights advocates and journalists who provided him with information that the Honduran military was illegally detaining, torturing and executing people.

"I had allegations about vans coming up to police cells and taking out people they [the Honduran military] didn't want ... and shooting them," Chidester said. "I had allegations that, as part of the interrogation techniques, torture was being used."

He said he included the allegations in his draft of the 1982 report.

A supervisor, who Chidester will not name, demanded proof -- sworn testimony or photographs of torture victims. Chidester said he was admonished for basing his report on rumors when he was unable to produce such evidence.

Chidester said he argued that while he had not interviewed torture victims, the allegations came from too many credible sources to be ignored, and that the reports were not supposed to be limited to provable facts.

"While the State Department is not an investigative body, we're supposed to analyze political events and identify trends," Chidester said. "Our analysis is valuable, even if based on opinion and not admissible as proof in a court of law."

His arguments failed.

By the time the report reached the U.S. Congress, the serious accusations against the Honduran military had been removed. Allegations that remained were described as unsubstantiated or isolated abuses that had been dealt with swiftly by the Honduran government.

Overall, the report portrayed Honduras as an emerging democracy where the civilian government and military respected human rights.

The report was such a misrepresentation of the facts that Chidester recalls joking with others in the embassy: "What is this, the human rights report for Norway?"

An official explanation

While Negroponte has refused to be interviewed by The Sun, his boss at the time of his appointment to Honduras described the priorities on human rights.

Thomas Enders, the assistant secretary of state who told Negroponte's predecessor to stop reporting rights violations through normal channels, said it was crucial to keep U.S. aid flowing to Honduras.

"What we were attempting to do was, on the one hand, to maintain our ability to act in Central America. That is, our congressional authority to send economic and military aid, so we avoided direct public confrontations against the military in El Salvador and Honduras," he said.

"And at the same time, privately we were spending an enormous amount of effort in order to change the way they looked at how they behaved. There was endless jawboning."

Instead of telling Congress what was going on in Central America, the Reagan administration employed the State Department human rights reports as instruments to advance policy objectives.

Consequently, the human rights reports differed sharply in tone, depending on whether the government was a friend or foe.

The 1982 report on Nicaragua -- where the United States was trying to topple the Marxist Sandinista regime -- made strong charges against that government.

A section titled "Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from Killing" said: "There is credible evidence that security forces have been responsible for the death of a number of detained persons in 1982."

In the same section of the Honduras report for 1982, the State Department said: "Allegations that death squads have made their appearance in Honduras have not been substantiated."

Cresencio Arcos, press spokes-man in the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa from June 1980 to July 1985 and U.S. ambassador from December 1989 to July 1993, explained the difference:

"Invariably, the result in this process was to magnify your enemies' misdeeds and minimize your friends' misdeeds," he said.

Ambassador Negroponte also made numerous public statements praising the Honduran military for supporting the civilian government and for respecting the rights of its people.

In a letter to the New York Times, published on Sept. 12, 1982, he wrote:

"Honduras' increasingly professional armed forces are dedicated to defending the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country, and they are publicly committed to civilian constitutional rule."

In October 1982, he wrote to The Economist: "Honduras' increasingly professional armed forces are fully supportive of this country's constitutional system."

That was the same year journalist Oscar Reyes and his wife were abducted and tortured by the Honduran military for a week because of articles he had written.

On Aug. 12, 1983, the Los Angeles Times published a Negroponte column in which he acknowledged that there were ""credible allegations of some disappearances."

However, he added: "There is no indication that the infrequent human rights violations that do occur are part of deliberate government policy. Indeed, disciplinary action has been taken against members of the police and military (including officers) who have abused their authority."

That year, in a case that gained notoriety, the 24-year-old leftist Ines Consuelo Murillo was held for more than 11 weeks -- naked, beaten, suffocated, shocked, fondled and threatened with rape.

To this day, none of her torturers has been punished.

Arcos said that Negroonte privately expressed concerns about abuses to Honduran officials.

"The ambassador did pressure the Hondurans. Not publicly. Quietly," Arcos said.

"We were concerned by the issue. Reports [of human rights abuses] were increasing."

Even years after he left Honduras, Negroonte would not publicly acknowledge the crimes of kidnapping, torture and murder that were committed by the Honduran military.

During his Senate Foreign Relations Committee confirmation hearing as ambassador to Mexico in 1989, Negroonte was asked about Battalion 316 and its abuses.

"I have never seen any convincing substantiation that they were involved in death squad-type activities," he said.

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**Appendix Five: *Negroponte's Time In Honduras at Issue*** By Michael Dobbs,  
Washington Post, March 21, 2005

It has been two decades since John D. Negroponte left his post as ambassador to Honduras, but the man President Bush has chosen to become the United States' first intelligence czar is still being hounded by human rights activists such as Zenaida Velasquez.

Their paths first intersected in 1983, when Velasquez asked for the ambassador's help in tracing dozens of Hondurans, including her brother, allegedly kidnapped by agents of the U.S.-backed Honduran military. Little came of the meeting, and the disappearances continued for at least another year.

Over the years, Velasquez has gotten the CIA, an official Honduran ombudsman and an international human rights court to acknowledge that the Honduran army was responsible for her brother Manfredo's kidnapping and presumed killing. But Negroponte has repeatedly insisted that military-backed death squads did not operate in Honduras while he was ambassador.

The selection of Negroponte for the new post of national intelligence director has focused renewed attention on the question of how much he knew about the Honduran military's involvement in nearly 200 unsolved kidnappings during the 1980s, and what he did about it. The subject has dogged him in the past, and Democratic staff members said it is likely to be revisited when the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence holds nomination hearings, tentatively scheduled for April 12.

A review of hundreds of declassified State Department and CIA documents suggests that Negroponte was preoccupied with "managing perceptions" about a country that had become a key U.S. ally in a decade-long campaign to stop the spread of communism in Central America. The documents show that he sought to depict Honduras in a generally positive light in annual human rights reports to Congress, and played down allegations of government abuse.

Opinions differ sharply over whether Negroponte, who served most recently as U.S. envoy to Iraq and the United Nations, ever suppressed pertinent intelligence information for fear of undermining support for U.S. policies.

Negroponte's admirers see him as a tough-minded, professional diplomat who loyally implemented Reagan administration policies in Central America during an exceptionally difficult period. His critics view him as a symbol of what they consider a dark chapter in American history, when the United States closed its eyes to crimes by Third World strongmen because they were seen as partners in a larger anti-communist crusade.

For Velasquez, who founded a relatives' committee to investigate the spate of kidnappings and disappearances in Honduras in the early 1980s and is now a U.S. citizen living in California, the controversy is more personal. She wants Negroponte to do something he has so far declined to do: acknowledge the existence of death squads in Honduras, and their ties with the U.S.-backed Honduran security forces.

"It's like a slap in the face," she said of Negroponte's selection to the intelligence post. "He knew what was going on, but he still refuses to speak the truth."

Negroponte declined through a spokesman to be interviewed for this article, in accordance with the tradition that presidential nominees refrain from public statements before their confirmation hearings. Appearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in September 2001, before

assuming the U.N. post, he continued to insist that the disappearances were not the result of Honduran "government policy."

### Human Rights Concerns

When John Dmitri Negroponte arrived in Tegucigalpa as ambassador in December 1981 at age 42, Honduras had just become key to the Reagan administration's strategy of rolling back communism in Central America. Over the next six years, Honduras would become the principal staging ground for U.S.-backed contra rebels struggling to overthrow Nicaragua's Sandinista government.

Honduras had a better human rights record than its neighbors -- Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala -- and was fairly tranquil. The army was transferring power back to an elected civilian government, while retaining control over security matters.

After winning the 1980 election, President Ronald Reagan needed someone reliable in Honduras to replace Jack R. Binns, a Carter administration holdover. The new ambassador would coordinate a huge increase in military assistance, from \$3.9 million in 1980 to \$77.4 million in 1984. Negroponte had hawkish credentials: A former aide to Henry A. Kissinger, he had criticized his patron for making too many concessions to the North Vietnamese in the previous decade.

Before his departure, Binns had sent cables to Washington warning of some ominous human rights trends. Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martinez, who was selected to be commander in chief of the Honduran armed forces, told Binns privately that "extralegal" methods might be necessary to "take care" of subversives, declassified State Department documents show. He praised the "Argentine method" of dealing with the problem, which Binns took to refer to the kidnappings and disappearances of thousands of government opponents.

In June 1981, Binns cabled the State Department to say that he was "deeply concerned at increasing evidence of officially sponsored/sanctioned assassinations," which suggested that the repressive policies Alvarez favored were being implemented "much faster than we anticipated." The State Department's response, Binns said, was to instruct him to use "back channels," meaning the CIA, to report on sensitive human rights issues that could create problems for Honduras if they were leaked to Congress or the media.

A 1994 report by Oscar Valladares, a lawyer appointed by the Honduran parliament to investigate human rights abuse, blamed the Honduran army and the contras for 174 disappearances and kidnappings in the 1980s. Most of the incidents took place before the March 1984 ouster of Alvarez as armed forces chief.

The kidnapping of Manfredo Velasquez in September 1981, a few weeks before Negroponte arrived in Honduras, established what would be a familiar pattern. A university student and left-wing political activist, Velasquez was seized in daylight in a public parking lot by several men in civilian clothes, one of whom was later identified as a Honduran police sergeant. They bundled him into a car, and he was never seen again.

According to a November 1985 CIA report, which has since been partly declassified, the kidnapping was the work of the Honduran Anti-Communist Liberation Army, or ELACH. A 1997 CIA study identified ELACH as a "death squad" with close ties to a special security unit reporting to Alvarez.

In a 1988 ruling, the Inter-American Commission Court on Human Rights found the government of Honduras responsible for Velasquez's disappearance and ordered it to pay damages to his family.

## Disappearances Continue

The disappearances continued after Negroponete became ambassador. The Valladares report cites 17 disappearances and kidnappings in 1982, 20 in 1983 and 18 in 1984. There were 26 disappearances in 1985, but they were mainly the work of the contras, rather than Honduran security forces, the report says. The kidnapped included trade union activists, journalists and professors opposed to the military authorities.

The embassy played down the problems in the annual human rights reports on Honduras that it was required to submit to Congress, according to declassified cables collected by the National Security Archive, a nonprofit research group. In 1982, for example, the embassy recommended including a sentence asserting that there was "no evidence of systematic violation of judicial procedures" by the Honduran police.

"Allegations to the effect that death squads have made their appearance in Honduras appear to be totally without merit," the embassy cable added, reflecting a position Negroponete has maintained ever since.

In an interview, Binns noted that reporting about killings and disappearances "would have made it much more difficult to sustain our economic and security assistance" to Honduras.

A 1997 report by then-CIA Inspector General Frederick P. Hitz on CIA activities in Honduras contains numerous references to Negroponete's concerns about the possible "political ramifications" of negative human rights reporting. It cites several instances when reports were "suppressed" or given very limited circulation because of fears that they "would reflect negatively on Honduras." Hitz quoted an analyst at the Defense Intelligence Agency as saying that "the Embassy country team" wanted to keep human rights reporting "benign" in order "to avoid Congress looking over its shoulders and to keep Congress satisfied with the ongoing implementation of U.S. policy." The analyst's name was redacted.

Raymond Burghardt, head of the embassy's political section under Negroponete, said he never felt any pressure from Negroponete to "pull our punches or delude anybody in Washington as to what the real situation was." But he did not contest references in the 1997 CIA report to attempts by Negroponete to "manage perceptions" of Honduras in Washington at a time when the political debate about Central America was highly partisan.

"There are two ways you can manage reporting," said Burghardt, who is now director of seminars at the East-West Center in Hawaii. "One way is to make sure that reports are balanced. . . . The other is to steer people away from reporting on certain topics, and lie about what is going on. Negroponete's approach was the former, not the latter."

Negroponete and his supporters have criticized some of the conclusions of Hitz's report, saying that the ambassador never "suppressed" information about human rights abuse. During Negroponete's 2001 Senate confirmation hearing, then-Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) quoted from a letter written by a senior CIA officer at the Tegucigalpa embassy asserting that decisions on disseminating such information were made entirely on "intelligence merits, and not on any extraneous political considerations."

In his own testimony, Negroponete described the Hitz report as "grossly unfair" and "misleading." He said his attitude about human rights reporting was "almost the opposite" of the picture presented in the inspector general's report.

Desperate to draw attention to the disappearance of her brother and dozens of other activists, Zenaida Velasquez tried every avenue available to her. She organized street demonstrations, filed complaints to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and helped set up a

Honduran committee for the relatives of the missing. She also badgered the U.S. Embassy for a meeting with Negro Ponte.

Velasquez says she and other relatives met with the ambassador around March 1983. "It was like a bucket of cold water," she said. "Our hopes were high, because we knew the influence that the embassy had with the government. But he denied knowing anything, and said it was an internal affair of Honduras. We got out of there wanting to cry."

Testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2001, Negro Ponte said he had no recollection of that meeting, but did not deny it took place. He expressed "surprise" that he would have described the disappearances as an "internal" Honduran affair.

Negro Ponte said he preferred "quiet diplomacy." On some occasions, he approached Alvarez and other Honduran leaders about the disappearances. The most frequently cited case was the July 1982 abduction of Oscar Reyes, a Honduran journalist sympathetic to the Sandinistas, and his wife, Gloria.

Reyes, who now edits the Spanish-language Catholic newspaper *El Pregonero* from an office near Catholic University, said in a recent interview that masked men took him and his wife from their house in Tegucigalpa to another house, where they were beaten and subjected to electric shocks. At one point, he was forced to undergo a mock execution in front of a tree, but the torturers changed their minds at the last moment, saying, "We'll kill him another day."

Cresencio Arcos, who was then the embassy media attache, said that he talked to Negro Ponte about the Reyeses' disappearance and that the ambassador took the matter up with Alvarez. Reyes and his wife were subsequently brought before a judge and eventually released.

While Reyes is grateful to Negro Ponte for "helping to save our lives," he said his case proves that U.S. diplomats exercised influence with Honduran authorities and were well-informed about what was going on. "If they saved our lives, they could have saved a lot of other people's lives as well," he said.

No attempt was made to find and arrest those who seized and tortured the Reyeses before handing them over to police. The embassy did not mention the incident in its annual human rights report on Honduras, which said the Honduran government had taken action "to discipline police who violated legal procedures."

#### CIA Group Backs Claims

In 1983, even as a dissident Honduran army officer accused Alvarez of masterminding "death squads," Reagan awarded him the Legion of Merit for "encouraging the success of democratic processes in Honduras."

Alvarez's fellow generals were less confident about his commitment to democracy. In March 1984, they accused him of abuse of authority and sent him into exile. He was hired by the Pentagon as a consultant on unconventional warfare, and was assassinated by leftist guerrillas in Tegucigalpa in 1989 while exploring a political comeback.

A CIA working group set up in 1996 to look into the U.S. role in Honduras found that "the Honduran military committed most of the hundreds of human rights abuses reported in Honduras" between 1980 and 1984. The report added that "death squads" linked to the military had used tactics such as "killings, kidnapping and torture" to deal with people suspected of supporting leftist guerrillas.

U.S. "intelligence collection and reporting requirements on human rights abuses [in Honduras] were subordinated to higher priorities," the CIA working group reported, according to a summary

released to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2001, before confirmation hearings on Negroonte's nomination to become U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

Attempts by Democratic senators to block the appointment evaporated after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. Meeting just two days later, the Foreign Relations Committee voted 14 to 3 to support the nomination, on the grounds that the Bush administration needed an experienced diplomat at the United Nations at such a crucial time.

While acknowledging that there had been occasional "abuses of authority" by Honduran police officials, Negroonte reiterated his assertion that they were not officially sanctioned. He told the committee that he associated the term "death squad" with events in El Salvador, where more than 50,000 people had disappeared.

"I did not think that any activities that were occurring in Honduras at that time fit that description," Negroonte said.

## **About May I Speak Freely Media**

May I Speak Freely Media (MISF) is a nonprofit media and education organization that produces and distributes film and other media on issues of social, environmental and economic justice. We work closely with activists, international NGOs and grassroots organizations to document threats to human and civil rights, educate the public about global issues, and build awareness about how historical events are relevant to contemporary political issues. MISF asks critical questions about our democratic process and works to stimulate public dialogue, civic participation and social change.

MISF is a fiscally-sponsored project of Media Island International, Olympia, Washington.

Our objectives are to:

- Report on foreign and domestic policies of our government and profile the people they impact;
- Provide information citizens need to clearly understand and interpret complex issues and make informed choices;
- Create forums for public education and discussion;
- Highlight information not included in mainstream media;
- Emphasize the power of individuals and provide tools for social action; and
- Encourage democratic participation and motivate individuals to hold media, corporations and government officials accountable to the people they serve.

**For more information, please visit [www.mayispeakfreely.org](http://www.mayispeakfreely.org) or contact Roz Dzelzitis, Executive Director, by e-mail at [roz@mayispeakfreely.org](mailto:roz@mayispeakfreely.org).**