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TEXT: 1. (C/NF) AS THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ALLEGED EL MOZOTE //GEO COORD 1355N 8808W// MASSACRE BY BIRI ATACATL TROOPS APPROACHES, THE ISSUE IS GAINING CONSIDERABLE MOMENTUM AS A RENEWED HUMAN RIGHTS RALLYING CRY. THE FOLLOWING IS A RE-TRANSMITTAL OF THE ONLY ON-STATION USDAO SAN SALVADOR DOCUMENTATION OF THE ALLEGED INCIDENT. IT IS RE-TRANSMITTED AS A BASELINE DOCUMENT FOR THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY. COMMUNITY-WIDE DOCUMENT SEARCH IS REQUESTED ON BEHALF OF AMBASSADOR. RE-TRANSMITTED IIR IS CONFIDENTIAL/NOFORN IN ENTIRETY.

BEGIN QUOTE:

- FROM: USDAO SAN SALVADOR ES
- TO: DIA WASH DC//JSI-4B/OS-1 /DB-3E2//DB-3E
- INFO: USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PN//SCJ2
- CDR193RDINFBDE(PAN) FT CLAYTON PN//IAGPP-PN
- COMUSFORCARIB KEY WEST FL//J2
- USDAO GUATEMALA CITY GT
- USDAO MEXICO CITY MX

- CONFIDENTIAL NOFORN

- SUBJ: IR 6 829 0038 82/EL SALVADOR/CONVERSATION WITH ATACATL BATTALION OFFICERS CONCERNING ALLEGED MIS-CONDUCT OF THE ARMY IN MORAZAN DEPARTMENT/(U)

- THIS IS AN INFO REPORT, NOT FINALLY EVALUATED INTEL

- 1. (U) CTRY: EL SALVADOR (ES)
- 2. (U) IR NO: 6 829 0038 82

- 3. (U) TITLE: CONVERSATION WITH ATACATL BATTALION OFFICERS CONCERNING ALLEGED MIS-CONDUCT OF THE ARMY IN MORAZAN DEPARTMENT.

- 4. (U) DATE OF INFO: 820201
- 5. (U) ORIG: USDAO SAN SALVADOR, ES
- 6. [REDACTED]] *NIC*
- 7. (U) SOURCE: [REDACTED]] *(C) S/M*
- 8. (C/NOFORN) SUMMARY: (ENTIRE TEXT) CONFIDENTIAL/NOFORN) THIS IR PROVIDES A SUMMARY OF REMARKS MADE BY LIEUTENANT COLONEL JOSE DOMINGO ((MONTERROSA)), COMMANDING OFFICER OF THE ATACATL BATTALION; MAJOR JESUS NATIVIDAL ((CASERES)), EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE ATACATL BATTALION; MAJOR JOSE ARMANDO

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((AZMITIA)) MELARA, S-3 OF THE ATACATL BATTALION ON THE ALLEGATIONS THAT ATROCITIES WERE COMMITTED BY ELEMENTS OF THE ARMED FORCES OF EL SALVADOR. THE INCIDENT DISCUSSED IN THESE CONVERSATIONS IS ALLEGED TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN THE VICINITY OF EL MOZOTE (1355N-8808W), MORAZAN DEPARTMENT, DURING OPERATION "RESCATE" (6-17 DECEMBER 1981). THE ATACATL BATTALION PARTICIPATED IN OPERATION "RESCATE".

- 9A. (C/NOFORN) DETAILS: (ENTIRE TEXT CONFIDENTIAL/NOFORN)

- (1) THE EXACT PURPOSE OF RO'S VISIT TO THE ATACATL BATTALION (I.E. TO DETERMINE THE MISSION ASSIGNED, AND SUCCESSIVE POSITIONS OCCUPIED BY THE BATTALION DURING OPERATION "RESCATE"; AND TO SPECIFICALLY DETERMINE IF THE BATTALION, OR ELEMENTS THEREOF, WERE INVOLVED IN THE FIGHTING AROUND AND IN EL MOZOTE, MORAZAN DEPARTMENT DURING THAT OPERATION) WAS PUT TO THE COMMANDING OFFICER, LTC MONTERROSA SHORTLY AFTER GREETINGS AND PLEASANTRIES WERE EXCHANGED. LTC MONTERROSA REMAINED DISTANTLY COURTEOUS, BUT HE FIRMLY TOLD RO THAT HE WAS NOT IN A POSITION TO DISCUSS THESE SPECIFIC SUBJECTS, AND THAT RO HAD BETTER OBTAIN PERMISSION FROM THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE ARMED FORCES BEFORE HE CAME WITH SUCH INQUIRIES TO HIS (LTC MONTERROSA'S) BATTALION. (RO NOTE: QUITE FRANKLY, RO FELT THAT THE INTERVIEW, ALBEIT SHORT, WAS THUS TO BE TERMINATED). RO MADE THE OBLIGATORY APOLOGIES FOR WHAT THE COLONEL MAY HAVE INTERPRETED AS IMPERTINENCE. RO ALSO POINTED OUT THAT CANDID ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS POSED WOULD FACILITATE COUNTERING RECENT PRESS RELEASES WHICH WERE LESS THAN COMPLIMENTARY TO THE ARMED FORCES OF EL SALVADOR.

- (2) AT THIS POINT MAJOR AZMITIA INTERJECTED WITH WHAT CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS A PARABLE: THE UNIT THAT HAD FOUGHT AT EL MOZOTE HAD HAD A TOUGH TIME OF IT, AND THAT BECAUSE OF THE INTENSITY AND DURATION OF THE BATTLE (RO NOTE: MAJOR AZMITIA SEEMED TO SLIP HERE, AS HE USED THE FIRST PERSON PLURAL "WHEN WE APPROACHED EL MOZOTE IN THE EARLY AFTERNOON...." "-----" "CUANDO NOS ACERCAMOS A AQUEL PUEBLO EN LA TARDE.....") THERE WERE UNDOUBTEDLY CASUALTIES AMONG NON-COMBATANTS. COL MONTERROSA THEN TOOK UP THE NARRATIVE. HE SAID THAT THE UNIT INVOLVED HAD HAD TO FIGHT THROUGH FIXED ENEMY POSITIONS, THEN, ONCE IN THE TOWN, FIRE WAS RECEIVED FROM THE HOUSES IN THE TOWN (RO NOTE: LTC MONTERROSA NOW UTILIZED THE FIRST PERSON: "I DO NOT HAVE X-RAY VISION, AND I CAN NOT SEE INSIDE THE HOUSE FROM WHICH SOMEONE IS SHOOTING AT ME; NOR IN THOSE TYPE OF CIRCUMSTANCES AM I VERY DISPOSED TO WASTE TIME TRYING TO FIND OUT WHO ELSE MIGHT BE IN THE HOUSE.") LTC MONTERROSA THEN STATED (IN THE THIRD PERSON) THAT 90MM RECOILESS RIFLES WERE USED AGAINST THE HOUSE FROM WHICH FIRE WAS RECEIVED. AT THIS

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POINT LTC MONTERROSA SAID HE WANTED TO REITERATE TO RO THAT HE DID NOT KNOW WHICH DAY (OF THE OPERATION) RO WAS INTERESTED IN, AND THAT HE WAS ONLY SPEAKING IN GENERAL, NOT SPECIFIC, TERMS ABOUT WHAT HAD OCCURRED AT EL MOZOTE.

- (3) MAJOR AZMITIA COMMENTED THAT "THEY HAD BEEN THERE (EN LA ZONA DE MOZOTE) FROM EARLY AFTERNOON UNTIL LATE IN THE AFTERNOON (DESDE LAS TEMPRANAS HORAS DE LA TARDE HASTA MUY TARDE) FIGHTING." THEN HE SWITCHED TO THE THIRD PERSON AND SAID THAT CASUALTIES HAD BEEN HEAVY (NFI) AMONG GOVERNMENT TROOPS. AS AN ASIDE, HE SAID THE FIGHTING IN ARAMBALA (1356N-8808W), MORAZAN DEPARTMENT, HAD NOT BEEN SO HEAVY.

- (4) RO ASKED LIEUTENANT COLONEL MONTERROSA IF HE KNEW IF ANY PRISONERS HAD BEEN TAKEN DURING OR AFTER THE BATTLE FOR EL MOZOTE. AGAIN, THE COLONEL ASSUMED AN ADAMANT DEMEANOR, AND SUGGESTED THAT RO CONSULT WITH THE GENERAL STAFF, OR GET PERMISSION FROM THE GENERAL STAFF TO ASK HIM SUCH QUESTIONS. HE THEN PROCEEDED TO REPEAT THAT HE COULD NOT ANSWER RO'S QUESTIONS ABOUT HIS BATTALION'S PARTICIPATION IN THE RESCATE OPERATION UNTIL HE HAD PERMISSION FROM THE GENERAL STAFF TO DO SO. THEN HE SEEMED TO MELLOW SOMEWHAT, AS HE EXPRESSED WHAT APPEARED TO BE GENUINE INTEREST IN REVIEWING THE PARTICIPATION OF THE ATLCATL BATTALION, WITH RO, IN THE ENTIRE OPERATION. IF THE GENERAL STAFF WOULD NOTIFY HIM THAT HE COULD DO SO, HE WOULD SIT DOWN WITH RO AND SHOW HIM HOW HIS BATTALION MOVED, THE ORDERS HE ISSUED (HE CLAIMED HE KEPT THESE), AND HOW THE ENEMY REACTED. LACKING GENERAL STAFF APPROVAL, HE COULD NOT, AND HE STATED HE WAS SORRY HE COULD NOT, PROVIDE RO WITH THE ASSISTANCE HE WAS SEEKING. THE INTERVIEW HAD COME TO AN END

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- (6) RO WAS ESCORTED TO HIS VEHICLE BY MAJOR AZMITIA, WHO ACTED APOLOGETIC ABOUT THE FACT THAT THEY COULD NOT PROVIDE MORE FACTS ABOUT EL MOZOTE, BUT HE WAS SURE THAT THE RO UNDERSTOOD WHAT LTC MONTERROSA HAD BEEN TALKING ABOUT.

- 9B. (C/NOFORN) ORIG CMTS: (ENTIRE TEXT CONFIDENTIAL/NOFORN)

- (1) THE ABOVE INTERVIEW WAS ARRANGED BASED ON AN INQUIRY BY THE AMBASSADOR TO TRY AND DETERMINE WHAT UNIT OR UNITS PARTICIPATED IN THE ATTACK ON EL MOZOTE DURING OPERATION "RESCATE". RO ARRIVED AT ATLCATL BATTALION

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HEADQUARTERS SHORTLY AFTER 1500 HOURS (L) ON 1 FEBRUARY 1982. HE LEFT SHORTLY AFTER 1700 HOURS (L).

(2) MAJOR AZMITIA WAS PRESENT DURING THE ENTIRE PERIOD RO SPENT WITH LTC MONTERROSA; MAJ CASERES ENTERED ABOUT MID-DISCUSSION.

[REDACTED]

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(3) ALL THREE OFFICERS MENTIONED IN THIS REPORT WERE IN MORAZAN DEPARTMENT DURING OPERATION "RESCATE", ALTHOUGH MAJOR CASERES APPARENTLY SPENT PERIODS AT THE BATTALION HEADQUARTERS AT SITIO DEL NINO (1348N-8922W) DURING THE OPERATION.

(4) THE TWO HOURS SPENT WITH THESE THREE OFFICERS WAS INTERESTING TO SAY THE LEAST. THE NUANCES, SUBTILITIES AND INDIRECT COMPARISONS USED BY LTC MONTERROSA AND MAJ AZMITIA WERE INTRIGUING. YET THE CENTRAL QUESTIONS REMAIN WITHOUT DEFINITIVE ANSWERS.

(5) RO'S PERSONAL OPINION, AND HE EMPHASIZES "PERSONAL", IS THAT ATACATL BATTALION OR ELEMENTS THEREIN PARTICIPATED IN THE ATTACK ON EL MOZOTE. PRECLUDING PERMISSION FROM GENERAL GARCIA, MINISTER OF DEFENSE, DEFINITIVE ANSWERS AS TO THE MISSION, POSITIONS, AND ACTIONS PARTICIPATED IN, OF THE ATACATL BATTALION IN OPERATION "RESCATE" MAY NEVER BE FORTHCOMING.

(6) THIS IR SUPPLEMENTS IR 6 829 0034 82, AND AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR 773, DTG 312020Z JAN 82.

[REDACTED]

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DEFENSE (U) APP BY: DENNIS M. DUGGAN, COL, GS, ATTACHE.

(U) REQ EVAL: NO REL TO: N/A

(U) ENCL: N/A

(U) DIST BY ORIG: N/A

REVW FEB 82.

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