

Print Message(s)

B3 DOD-PII

~~CONFIDENTIAL//NF~~

RELEASE IN PART B7(D),B5,B3  
DOD-PII,B6

(b)(3):10  
USC 424

**ENVELOPE**

OTTCZYUW RUEKJCS1661 0610436-CCCC--RUCDGDA.

ZNY CCCCC

**HEADER**

O  
020436Z MAR 83  
FM JCS WASHINGTON DC

INFO RUEADWD/CSA WASHINGTON DC  
RUENAAA/CNO WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAHQA/CSAF WASHINGTON DC  
RUEADWD/PTC WASH DC  
RUEAMCC/CMC CC WASHINGTON DC  
RUEOFAA/JSOC FORT BRAGG NC  
RUCJAAA/USCINCRD MACDILL AFB FL  
RUCIFBA/MACOS INTEL CENTER SCOTT AFB IL//INW/INZ//  
RUCJAAA/USCINCRD MACDILL AFB FL//RCJ2//  
RUEBBJB/HQ AFOSI BOLLING AFB DC  
RUEBARE/DIRNAVINSERV WASHINGTON DC  
RUDHAAB/CDRUSAITAC ARLINGTON HALL STATION VA  
RUEOAYB/ESTC INTEL OPS CHARLOTTESVILLE VA  
RUCDGDA/CDRMICOM REDSTONE ARS AL//DRSMI-YX//  
O

272321Z FEB 83  
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 4668  
INFO RUE SBG/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 2276

RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0746  
RUEHGT/AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA 1131  
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO 2671  
RUEHSJ/AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE 4020  
RUESTE/AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA 0417  
RUEOEHA/USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PN  
BT

**CONTROLS**

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ SECTION 01 OF 02

SAN SALVADOR 01661

E.O. 12356 DECL 2/27/89  
/\*\*\*\*\* THIS IS A COMBINED MESSAGE \*\*\*\*\*/

**BODY**

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TAGS PINS, ES

SUBJECT

(C) CAMPESINO KILLINGS IN SONSONATE DEPARTMENT

1. C--ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY ON FEBRUARY 26 THE LABOR OFFICER VISITED SONSONATE WHERE THE NATIONAL INDIAN ASSOCIATION (ANIS), AN ETHNIC INDIAN FOUNDATION OF AGRARIAN COOPERATIVES, INFORMED HIM OF RECENT KILLINGS OF THEIR MEMBERS. THE ANIS LEADERSHIP SAID THAT 17 CAMPESINOS HAVE BEEN MURDERED ON ONE OF THEIR MEMBER COOPERATIVES. MORE BODIES ARE BEING FOUND WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME. END SUMMARY.

3. [REDACTED] TOLD LABOFF THAT ON FEBRUARY 22 MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES, SPECIFICALLY THE ARMY, KILLED 17 CAMPESINOS ON THE LAS HOJAS COOPERATIVE IN SONSONATE DEPARTMENT. THE FOLLOWING IS AN ACCOUNT OF EVENTS AS RELATED BY [REDACTED]

B6  
B7(D)

TWO HUNDRED SOLDIERS OR MORE HEADED BY CAPTAIN FIGUEROA MORALES ENTERED THE LAS HOJAS COOPERATIVES (FEBRUARY 22). THEY DETAINED AND BEAT UP SEVEN COOPERATIVE MEMBERS WHOM THEY TIED UP AND TOOK WITH THEM. LATER THAT MORNING AFTER FOLLOWING LOCAL LEADS TO A POINT ONE AND A HALF KILOMETERS FROM THE LAS HOJAS COOPERATIVE, [REDACTED] MEN FOUND 14 CORPSES WITH THEIR HANDS TIED BEHIND THEIR BACKS, ALL DEAD OF BULLET WOUNDS TO THE HEAD. [REDACTED] COMPANIONS RECOGNIZED SEVEN OF THE DEAD AS CO-OP MEMBERS, ALL MALES AND RANGING IN AGE FROM 19 TO 80. THE JUSTICE OF THE PEACE FROM SAN ANTONIO DEL MONTE REGISTERED THEIR DEATHS AND ORDERED THE REMOVAL OF THE BODIES FROM THE SCENE.

5. [REDACTED] SONSONATE DEPARTMENTAL COMMANDER COL. ELMER GONZALEZ SAID THAT HE KNEW OF A MILITARY OPERATION IN THE AREA IN WHICH 17 PEOPLE WERE KILLED. GONZALEZ SAID THAT THE OPERATION TOOK PLACE BECAUSE FOUR CAMPESINOS SURNAMED MEJIA WERE REPORTED TO HAVE FIRE ARMS IN THEIR POSSESSION. (COMMENT [REDACTED] SAID NO ONE NAMED MEJIA WAS FOUND AMONG THE DEAD.) [REDACTED] REPORTS THAT GONZALEZ ACCUSED ANIS OF HARBORING GUERRILLA INFILTRATORS AND TOLD [REDACTED] THAT THERE WERE PEOPLE WHO WANTED TO SEE HIM, [REDACTED] DEAD.

6. ON FEBRUARY 23 [REDACTED] LEADERS MET FOR TWO HOURS WITH DEFENSE MINISTER JOSE GUILLERMO

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GARCIA AND MINISTER OF THE PRESIDENCY FRANCISCO JOSE GUERRERO. PRESIDENT MAGANA ALSO MET BRIEFLY WITH THEM DURING THIS MEETING. THEY RECEIVED A PETITION FROM ANIS DEMANDING AN INVESTIGATION OF THE MURDERS. ACCORDING TO [REDACTED] THE DEFENSE MINISTER PROMISED THAT JUSTICE WOULD BE DONE. THE ANIS DELEGATION LEFT THE MEETING WITH GUARDED OPTIMISM. THEY ARE NOW AWAITING ACTION FROM THE GOVERNMENT.

7. [REDACTED] THAT THE PARTIES RESPONSIBLE FOR THE KILLINGS ARE A POWERFUL GROUP TRYING TO STEAL THE LAND OF THE INDIAN COOPERATIVES IN THE AREA. THEY ARE NOW ZEROING IN ON THE ANIS COOPERATIVE IN SONSONATE DEPARTMENT. THE LAS HOJAS COOPERATIVE WAS LEGALLY ESTABLISHED IN 1978 AND THE DEAD CAMPESINOS WERE MEMBERS OF THAT COOPERATIVE. LAS HOJAS, THEREFORE, CAME INTO BEING BEFORE AGRARIAN REFORM TOOK PLACE IN EL SALVADOR. [REDACTED] THAT TWO LOCAL LANDOWNERS ARE TRYING TO ILLEGALLY OBTAIN A THOROUGHFARE FOR THEIR CATTLE ON THE COOPERATIVE LANDS. THESE LANDOWNERS HAVE CONTACTS IN THE ARMED FORCES. [REDACTED] THEY ARE MARCIAL AND JOSE DOMINGO CACERES AND MARIO PEREZ, A EX-SOLDIER. [REDACTED] THAT ALL BEAR GRUDGES AGAINST ANIS. PEREZ REPORTEDLY IS A MEMBER OF THE LOCAL CIVIL DEFENSE ORGANIZATION.

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B7(D)

8. [REDACTED] THAT HIS LIFE IS IN DANGER. HE ALLEGES THAT LOCAL ENEMIES OF ANIS ACCUSE THE ASSOCIATION OF BEING INFILTRATED BY GUERRILLAS IN ORDER TO PROVOKE VIOLENT ACTS AGAINST THEM BY THE MILITARY. ANIS NOW FEELS THAT ITS LEADERSHIP IS BEING TARGETED. [REDACTED] TOLD LABOFF THAT HE WAS SET UPON AND SHOT AT BY UNSEEN SNIPERS WHILE HE WAS DELIVERING COFFINS FOR THE BURIAL OF SEVEN DEAD  
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/\*\*\*\*\* BEGINNING OF SECTION 2 \*\*\*\*\*/  
CAMPESINOS AT LAS HOJAS. HE CLAIMS THE ARMY HAS ACCUSED HIM OF BEING A COMMUNIST AND EXPRESSED BITTER RESENTMENT THAT US ECONOMIC AID IS INTERCEPTED AND NEVER REACHES CREDIT-HUNGRY COOPERATIVES LIKE ANIS. ON THE OTHER HAND HE CLAIMS MILITARY ASSISTANCE GIVES THE ARMED FORCES ENOUGH ORDNANCE TO KILL CAMPESINOS AND STEAL THEIR LAND.

[REDACTED] TOLD LABOFF FEBRUARY 27 THAT  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] REPORTS THAT THE DEATH TOLL IN THE AREA NOW

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\* COMES TO 80 PEOPLE. [REDACTED] TOURED THE SONSONATE AREA ON THURSDAY AND SAW 74 CORPSES IN LAS HOJAS AND OTHER LOCALITIES OF NAHUZALCO MUNICIPALITY. [REDACTED] REPORTED THAT SIX OTHER BODIES WERE SUBSEQUENTLY FOUND IN THE AREA. [REDACTED] CONFIRMED PREVIOUS REPORTS THAT THE ACTION WAS CARRIED OUT BY MORE THAN TWO HUNDRED SOLDIERS UNDER THE COMMAND OF CAPTAIN FIGUEROA MORALES. [REDACTED] INFORMED LABOFF THAT TWO MORE CORPSES WERE FOUND ON FEBRUARY 26 AND THAT A WOUNDED SURVIVOR IS PRESENTLY BEING CARED FOR IN THE SONSONATE HOSPITAL. (COMMENT IF THESE REPORTS ARE TRUE, THE TOTAL NUMBER OF DEATHS WOULD NOW REACH 82. LABOFF WILL TALK [REDACTED] HIS RETURN FROM SONSONATE AND REPORT SEPTEL.)

B6  
B7(D)

9. [REDACTED] THAT HE AND OTHER LABOR CAMPESINO LEADERS MET WITH PRESIDENT MAGANA FEBRUARY 26. MAGANA PROMISED TO PROSECUTE THE LOCAL COMANDANTE WHO APPARENTLY FINGERED THE SLAIN CAMPESINOS AS SUBVERSIVES TO THE ARMY. [REDACTED] THIS UNNAMED COMANDANTE FURNISHED FIGUEROA MORALES WITH A LIST OF SUSPECTED GUERRILLA INFILTRATORS IN LOCAL COOPERATIVES. [REDACTED] TERMED THIS A DISINFORMATION ATTEMPT CARRIED OUT BY PERSONS WHO WANT TO TAKE OVER THE CAMPESINO LAND OR SETTLE PRIVATE GRUDGES. [REDACTED] ALSO CLAIMED THAT A JOINT CAMPESINO ORGANIZATION -- GOES HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION REPORT WILL BE READY ON THE KILLINGS BY THE AFTERNOON OF FEBRUARY 27. (LABOFF WILL ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN A COPY OF THIS REPORT AS SOON AS IT IS AVAILABLE AND REPORT ON IT BY SEPTEL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.) [REDACTED] THAT HIS LIFE WAS THREATENED WHILE HE WAS IN SONSONATE OVER THE LAST FEW DAYS AND THAT OTHER LABOR CAMPESINO ACTIVISTS IN THE NAHUZALCO--SAN ANTONIO DEL MONTE AREA HAVE ALSO BEEN THREATENED. ALL CAMPESINO LEADERS IN THE AREA BELIEVE THEIR LIVES ARE PRESENTLY IN DANGER

10. THE EMBASSY WILL BE IN CONTACT WITH THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND THE CHIEF OF STAFF AS SOON AS THEY CAN BE LOCATED TO URGE THEM TO TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION ON THESE KILLINGS.

11. NEW YORK TIMES REPORTER LYDIA CHAVEZ HAS BEEN TO SONSONATE, HAS THE STORY AND WILL UNDOUBTEDLY FILE. WE KNOW THAT SHE SPOKE WITH CRISTOBAL ALEMAN WHILE SHE WAS THERE. WE ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT A MIAMI HERALD REPORTER WAS ALSO IN THE AREA FEBRUARY 26.

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12. PRESS GUIDANCE

IF ASKED BY THE PRESS, EMBASSY WILL REPLY THAT WHEN WE RECEIVED REPORTS OF THESE KILLINGS WE SENT AN EMBASSY OFFICER TO INVESTIGATE. WE CONFIRMED THAT A SERIES OF GRAVE INCIDENTS HAD TAKEN PLACE IN SONSONATE DEPARTMENT. UPON CHECKING WITH SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE GOES, THE AMBASSADOR AND SENATOR STONE RECEIVED ASSURANCES THAT A FULL INVESTIGATION IS ALREADY UNDERWAY AND THAT DISCIPLINARY ACTION WILL BE TAKEN.  
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