

12-13-1989

U.S. Citizen Jennifer Casolo & Seven Salvadorans Jailed For 90 Days Without Bond Prior To Trial

Deborah Tyroler

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen>

Recommended Citation

Tyroler, Deborah. "U.S. Citizen Jennifer Casolo & Seven Salvadorans Jailed For 90 Days Without Bond Prior To Trial." (1989).
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen/3599>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in NotiCen by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.

U.S. Citizen Jennifer Casolo & Seven Salvadorans Jailed For 90 Days Without Bond Prior To Trial

by Deborah Tyroler

Category/Department: General

Published: Wednesday, December 13, 1989

On Dec. 8, Judge Guillermo Romero Hernandez of the 1st Military Court ordered that US citizen Jennifer Casolo and seven Salvadorans remain jailed for 90 days while an investigation continues into their possible links to a cache of ammunition and explosives. Casolo was arrested in late November when police found more than 20,000 rounds of ammunition along with explosives and detonator caps buried in the backyard of the home she rented. She and the Salvadorans have been charged with terrorism, criminal and subversive association and possession of weapons of war. At the end of the 90-day period, the judge will decide if there is sufficient evidence to order a public trial. No bond was set for the eight defendants. Casolo, who has represented the Texas-based Christian Educational Seminars in El Salvador for nearly five years, has said she rented the house three months ago, traveled much of the time, and knew nothing about hidden munitions. According to AFP, if convicted in the case, Casolo faces an indeterminate prison sentence, and a possible fine equal to \$10,000. In a report published Dec. 9, Lindsey Gruson of the New York Times said the Times obtained copies of a videotape of security agents digging up the weapons in Casolo's yard, and statements she signed. In a statement purportedly signed by Casolo, she said that she had buried manuscripts, tapes of "protest music," files on unions and peasant organizations, human rights reports, and other papers in the yard of the house she rented. The videotape shows police finding a cassette tape of folk singer Tracy Chapman, manuscripts and papers with the weapons. The tape shows soldiers finding what appears to be a snapshot of Casolo and many other photographs she apparently took while leading visiting delegations across the country. An unidentified attorney familiar with the case, who was given an oral description of the tape and quotes from the statement, said in an interview with Gruson that it was hard to believe anyone seeking to hide contraband would be so stupid as to bury incriminating personal documents in the same hole. It is even more difficult to believe the person would then admit to burying the documents, the lawyer said. In the videotape and the signed statements, Casolo repeatedly denied knowledge of weapons buried in her yard. On the tape, made by the National Police during the search on Nov. 26, she said, "Somebody hates me or somebody is trying to frame me." Disputing Casolo's denial of involvement, the police said a rebel informer had pointed out the exact location of the arms cache. According to the lieutenant colonel who supervised the investigation, Casolo's arrest was a result of a five-month investigation that began with the discovery in May of the largest arms cache of the war. In a raid on Nov. 24, security forces found four types of rifles and arrested Fausto Gallardo Valdez. He initially said he was merely the caretaker and denied knowing about the guns. Under interrogation, Gallardo Valdez reportedly acknowledged his membership in the People's Revolutionary Army, one of the five guerrilla groups in the rebel coalition. Later, Gallardo, a 28-year-old mechanic, said there was an arms cache in a house in Mirabella. In return for promises of protection, he reportedly told interrogators that he had personally delivered and buried the weapons in plastic containers. Investigators said Gallardo told them the house belonged to a foreigner and gave a physical description resembling Casolo. Police said the rebel informer said Casolo was "well connected" and had served him a glass of water when he arrived at the house to deliver and hide the arms

shipments. The insurgents have denied that Casolo is linked to them. In a radio broadcast shortly after she was arrested, the guerrillas said she was not involved in hiding the arms. (Basic data from AP, AFP, 12/08/89; New York Times, 12/09/89)

-- End --