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El Salvador: C.i.a. Refuses To Submit Documents Requested By Jesuit Order In Multiple Murder Case

by Deborah Tyroler

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In a recent interview with Notimex, Jesuit Provincial for Central America, Jose Maria Tojeira, said that the Central Intelligence Agency had turned down a request by the Jesuit order to submit 21 documents considered necessary for the prosecution in the murder case of six priests and two women. The incident took place in November on the Central American University campus in San Salvador. After pointing out that nine months have passed, Tojeira expressed skepticism about Washington's commitment to solving the multiple homicide case. He added that he doubted "the government which has financed a war resulting in 70,000 deaths is motivated by altruistic ideals." In reference to the US officer, Maj. Erick Buckland, who reportedly provided information on soldiers involved in the massacre to a high-ranking Salvadoran military official, Tojeira stated that US voters could react negatively should the Bush administration decide to "wash its hands" of the case. Judge Ricardo Zamora, presiding in the case, announced nearly a month ago that Buckland was scheduled to appear in court. The US Embassy, however, has ignored requests by Salvadoran judiciary to authorize the major's testimony. Justifying US inaction, Salvadoran Foreign Minister Manuel Pacas said Buckland "has diplomatic immunity." According to Tojeira, a "web of lies" characterizes the murder case thus far, and there is little hope of identifying the "true authors" of the crime. The Jesuit leader said he would be satisfied if at the very least "high ranking military officials who have testified were exposed as liars." Msgr. Tojeira asserted that President Alfredo Cristiani bears responsibility for the murders. He added, "Whoever ordered the assassinations had a role in calming things down when the hand of justice began reaching out to high-level officers...My guess is that all this is very annoying to [top officers], and Cristiani's role is to try and halt the process." Both the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), and El Salvador's principal opposition party, the Christian Democrats, have accused Cristiani of "providing a cover-up for the intellectual authors of the multiple murder." Public statements to this effect were made subsequent to Cristiani's acknowledgement on July 12 that he had authorized search and seizure operations at the Central American University campus. Three days after his authorization, the priests were murdered in their home, located on university grounds. (Basic data from Notimex, 08/10/90)

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