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Former Salvadoran Soldier Sentenced To Six Months In U.S. Prison For Violating Immigration Law

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Dec. 7, the US Justice Department announced that former Salvadoran soldier Cesar Vielman Joya Martinez was sentenced to six months in jail by US Federal Judge Claude Hilton in Alexandria, Virginia. In September, a US Immigration and Naturalization (INS) judge found Joya Martinez guilty of violating US immigration law. In 1984, the INS deported Joya Martinez on grounds of lack of proper documentation. According to his recent testimony, in 1988 the former military intelligence unit corporal fled El Salvador and entered the US illegally. Joya Martinez said he left the country to escape persecution, and attempts against his life. Joya Martinez' attorneys have said they plan to appeal the ruling and will continue to fight for their client's political asylum. The Salvadoran government maintains that Joya Martinez deserted the 1st Infantry Brigade in San Salvador shortly after being charged with beating two civilians to death during a military operation. Joya Martinez has made no statements on these charges. Instead, he has offered to provide information on disappearances and assassinations of dissidents within his military intelligence unit. The Salvadoran government has requested extradition of Joya Martinez. (Basic data from Notimex, 12/07/90)

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