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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1833

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REVIEW AUTHORITY: Oscar Olson, Senior Reviewer

E.O. 12356: DECL: 9/27/88  
TAGS: SHUM, ES  
SUBJECT: (U) DISAPPEARANCE OF AMERICA FERNANDA PERDOMO  
- AND SAUL VILLALTA

REF: (A) SAN SALVADOR 7210, (B) STATE 242311

1. (U) THIS MESSAGE DETAILS OUR KNOWLEDGE AND ACTIONS CONCERNING THE SUBJECT DISAPPEARANCES.
2. (U) AT 1000 AUGUST 20, EL SALVADOR HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (CDHES) MEMBER AMERICA FERNANDA PERDOMO GAVE A PRESS CONFERENCE AT THE CDHES ARCHBISHOPRIC HEADQUARTERS. PERDOMO ANNOUNCED THAT SHE WOULD REPRESENT CDHES AS A MEDIATOR IN NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE FDR AND THE GOVERNMENT OF EL SALVADOR TO OBTAIN THE RELEASE AND EXCHANGE OF PRISONERS. THE OBJECTIVE WAS TO EXCHANGE MILITARY PRISONERS IN THE HANDS OF THE FMLN, INCLUDING SUBSECRETARY OF DEFENSE COL. ADOLFO CASTILLO, FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS HELD UNDER STATE OF SEIGE DECREE 507. TO THAT END CDHES HAD MADE GESTURES TO "ELEMENTS OF THE SALVADORAN GOVERNMENT AND CERTAIN DEMOCRATIC FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS," WHO WERE RECEPTIVE TO THE PROJECT. PERDOMO ANNOUNCED SHE WOULD BE APPROACHING THE FDR ON THE AFTERNOON OF AUGUST 20, AND  
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WOULD REPORT THE RESULTS IN A PRESS CONFERENCE ON AUGUST 21. (NOTE: THE EMBASSY DID NOT HAVE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF THE AUGUST 20 PRESS CONFERENCE. APPROXIMATELY TEN MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PRESS ATTENDED, INCLUDING TWO FROM THE CASA PRESIDENCIAL INFORMATION OFFICE.)

3. (C) MEMBERS OF CDHES PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING CONFIDENTIAL VERSION OF THE DISAPPEARANCES: (NAMES OF ALLEGED WITNESSES ARE EXCLUDED AT CDHES' REQUEST.) AT

845 ON AUGUST 20, NEIGHBORS WITNESSED SIXTEEN MEN IN CIVILIAN DRESS ARMED WITH G-3S ARRIVE AT HOUSE NUMBER 10, ASAJE LOS ANDES, CALLE SIERRA MADRE, COLONIA MONTEBELLO, AN SALVADOR. SOME OF THEM ENTERED THE HOUSE AND REMOVED FIVE INDIVIDUALS TO THE VEHICLES IN WHICH THE MEN HAD ARRIVED (A WHITE HIACE VAN AND A GRAY TOYOTA COROLLA.) ON AUGUST 25 A SIMILAR GROUP OF MEN ARRIVED AND REMOVED THE ENTIRE CONTENTS OF THE HOUSE INTO TWO FORD TRUCKS. THE ALLEGEDLY CAPTURED INDIVIDUALS ARE: CDHES MEMBER AMERICA ERNANDA PERDOMO, FDR MEMBER SAUL VILLALTA, COMMITTEE OF OTHERS OF POLITICAL PRISONERS AND DISAPPEARED MEMBER MARIA ELENA MARTINEZ DE RECINOS, HER THIRTEEN YEAR OLD DAUGHTER, AND AN UNIDENTIFIED MALE. RECINOS WAS RENTING THE HOUSE ON PASAJE LOS ANDES. HER HUSBAND IS HECTOR ERNABE RECINOS, A JAILED FENASTRAS UNION LEADER ACCORDING TO CDHES. VILLALTA AND PERDOMO WERE NEGOTIATING THE PRISONERS EXCHANGE IN THE HOUSE AT THE TIME OF THEIR CAPTURE.

. (C) ON SEPTEMBER 21 A WOMAN DECLARED TO CDHES MEMBERS THAT SHE HAD SEEN THE BODY OF AMERICA FERNANDA PERDOMO ON THE ROAD TO ZARAGOZA IN THE DEPARTMENT OF LA LIBERTAD, WHILE SEARCHING FOR THE BODY OF HER SON, WHICH SHE CLAIMED CONFIDENTIAL

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TO HAVE FOUND AT THE SAME SITE. THE WOMAN RECOGNIZED PERDOMO'S BODY BECAUSE PERDOMO HAD TAKEN HER TESTIMONY AT CDHES ON AUGUST 17, WHEN SHE WENT TO DENOUNCE HER SON'S DISAPPEARANCE. WHEN CDHES MEMBERS WENT TO THE SITE LATER THAT DAY, THEY FOUND NO BODY. THE JUSTICE OF THE PEACE WHO RECOGNIZED THE BODY OF THE WOMAN'S SON, STATED THAT THERE WAS NO OTHER BODY THERE ON THAT DAY, BUT THE WOMAN INSISTS THERE WAS WHEN SHE ARRIVED.

5. (C) CDHES REPRESENTATIVES SAY THEY BELIEVE THAT THE NATIONAL POLICE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FIVE DISAPPEARANCES. THEY CITE THE FOLLOWING TWO REASONS:

- 1) THE NATIONAL POLICE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ARRESTS OF CDHES MEMBERS ON FOUR OCCASIONS SINCE 1978, INCLUDING A CLANDESTINE DETENTION IN 1981 WHEN THE ICRC ALLEGEDLY RESCUED A CDHES MEMBER WHO HAD MANAGED TO PASS WORD OF HIS LOCATION THROUGH ANOTHER PRISONER. THEY BELIEVE THE NATIONAL POLICE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR AT LEAST TWO MURDERS OF CDHES MEMBERS AND TWO BOMBINGS OF CDHES HEADQUARTERS DURING THAT PERIOD.
- 2) THE NATIONAL POLICE HAVE JURISDICTION OVER THE NEIGHBORHOOD WHERE THE CAPTURES ALLEGEDLY TOOK PLACE.

6. (U) CDHES ORIGINALLY CLAIMED UNIFORMED MEMBERS OF THE TREASURY POLICE CARRIED OUT THE CAPTURES IN AN AUGUST 23

PRESS STATEMENT. TREASURY POLICE DIRECTOR COL. FRANCISCO MORAN DENIED THIS. THE ARMED FORCES PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE, COPREFA, SUBSEQUENTLY DENIED THAT ANY UNITS OF THE ARMED FORCES HAD CAPTURED THE INDIVIDUALS. THE AMBASSADOR HAS WRITTEN TO DEFENSE MINISTER GEN. GARCIA ASKING WHETHER THE ARMED FORCES HAVE DETAINED PERDOMO,

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 SAN SALVADOR 07969

VILLALTA, RECINOS, OR HER DAUGHTER. WE ARE WAITING FOR  
A REPLY.  
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