

What Else Did The C.I.A. Know?

By Samuel Blake

The disclosure that the C.I.A. employed a Guatemalan Army colonel involved in the torture and murder of Michael DeVine, an American who ran an inn in the jungle, and an insurgent married to Jennifer Harbury, an American lawyer, comes as no surprise to my family.

Exactly 10 years ago, Guatemalan paramilitary forces escorted my brother Nick Blake, a freelance journalist, and a photographer, Griffin Davis, out of the village of El Llano in the highlands and shot them dead with high-powered rifles. Both men had gone into the mountains to try to interview left-wing guerrillas who had been waging a civil war in Guatemala for more than three decades.

The paramilitary forces hid the bodies for a year until public pressure forced the army to burn and rebury the remains in hopes that the truth would never be known.

From 1985 to 1992, the highest levels of Guatemala's Government lied to my family about what had happened to Nick and Griff, blaming guerrillas for their disappearance.

In June 1992, after information implicating the army in the deaths came to our attention, my brother and I went to the highlands where their remains lay, 90 miles northwest of Guatemala City. We excavated the remains, and Dr. Douglas Owsley, a forensic anthropologist at the Smithsonian Institution, identified them.

In December 1992, the U.S. Ambassador, Marilyn McAfee, took me to see President Ramiro de Leon Carpio. He admitted that the security forces had killed Nick and Griff and that the army high command had covered up the murders. He promised to seek justice for our families.

To this day, the promises remain empty. The Government won't admit officially who ordered Nick's and Griff's executions, why they were killed, why their deaths were covered

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up and by whom, and it refuses to discipline or prosecute those involved in the murders and cover-up.

For the most part, for 10 years, Washington has parroted the nonsense spouted by the Guatemalans that guerrillas or "brigands" killed Nick and Griff. As we pressed our own investigation, it became clear that elements of our Government, mainly C.I.A. and State Department officials, were running interference for their friends in the Guatemalan Army.

We always suspected that our Government knew a great deal about the army's role in the murders. With the disclosures about Mr. DeVine and Ms. Harbury's husband, Efrain Bamaça Velasquez (a guerrilla supposedly protected by the Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners),

A decade ago, two murders in Guatemala.

our worst fears have been confirmed — that our intelligence and national security agencies are withholding information that could shed light on the slayings.

Our families would like the Congressional intelligence committees to hold public hearings and subpoena officials and documents from the C.I.A. and the State and Defense Departments that might help in the quest for truth and justice in our case and the other cases. □

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Death in Guatemala

What did the CIA know; when did it know it?

The record of the Central Intelligence Agency in Central America has been a long and sorry one.

In Panama, the agency's chief asset was the notorious Manuel Noriega, who played both sides against the middle, taking the CIA's pay and letting drug lords set up shop.

In Nicaragua, CIA operatives mined the shipping lanes, and later resupplied the contras, both times misleading Congress in the process.

In El Salvador, the record was no better: The agency alternately turned a blind eye to Salvadoran military involvement in odious death squads (despite the fact that the army was a virtual creature of U.S. funding) and helped undermine fair elections.

But nowhere has the CIA's role been longer, more instrumental and dubious than in Guatemala. In recent weeks, the CIA has been the center of a new storm over whether it knowingly kept a Guatemalan colonel on the payroll even after he was implicated in two murders: the torture-death of a rebel married to a U.S. citizen and the killing of an Iowan who had come to the rain forest in 1971 to set up an inn with his wife and adopted children.

It was House Intelligence Committee member Robert G. Torricelli (D., N.J.), who made those explosive charges last week, siding with the

claims of Washington-based lawyer Jennifer Harbury, who had been conducting high-profile hunger strikes in Guatemala and Washington. This week, he added that he had new reports that U.S. Army intelligence may have assisted a "criminal element" in the bosom of the CIA.

That kind of charge cannot be left hanging. Since the agency's acting director, Adm. William O. Studeman, has already denied it, the CIA can hardly be expected to get to the bottom of the matter. Mr. Torricelli makes a compelling case, instead, for congressional hearings.

They could have at their center the question of whether rogue agents were tolerating lawless hit squads in the name of law-abiding Americans.

But they should not forget the context of the CIA's long role in Guatemala, including its hand in the 1954 overthrow of the country's elected, reformist government — an action that squeezed Indians off their land, stalled peaceful labor reform and sowed the seeds for an insurgency that persists to this day.

In investigating the deaths of an American innkeeper and the husband of an American lawyer, perhaps this country will come to learn more about the 100,000 Guatemalan civilians whose lives have been lost in that sad struggle.