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Department of State

INCOMING TELEGRAM

E1344

ACTION

ACTION COPY

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ACTION OCS-05

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GUATEM 05591 00 OF 05
HEARD OF THE TWO DISAPPEARED AMERICANS.

INFO LOG-00 ADS-00 INR-06 CIRE-00 H-01 ARA-00 NSAE-00
NA-00 INRE-00 CA-02 JUSE-00 FBTE-00 /024 W
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R 082052Z MAY 88
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0632
INFO AMEMBASSY MEXICO

CONFIDENTIAL GUATEMALA 05591

MEXICO FOR LEGATT
DEPT FOR ARA/CEN AND MA/HR

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: CASC, PRUN, PREL, CT BLAKE, NICHOLAS AND DAVIS,
GRIFFITH
SUBJECT: BLAKE FAMILY VISITS HUEHUETENANGO,
SCHOOLTEACHER ACCUSES MILITARY OF COVER UP

REF: GUATEMALA 05131 AND PREVIOUS

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SUMMARY
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1. (C) POLOFF ACCOMPANIED MESSRS. RICHARD BLAKE AND RANDY BLAKE, FATHER AND BROTHER OF DISAPPEARED AMERICAN NICHOLAS BLAKE, TO HUEHUETENANGO MAY 4. THE BLAKES MET ZONE COMMANDER GENERAL ROBERTO MATA GALVEZ AND, LATER, JAMES ELLSON AND JUSTO MARTINEZ. WHILE THE BLAKES SPOKE TO MATA, POLOFF SPOKE WITH VICENTE CIFUENTES LOPEZ, A PAC MEMBER ALLEGEDLY INVOLVED IN THE AMERICANS' MURDER. CIFUENTES DENIED ANY KNOWLEDGE OF THE DISAPPEARANCE. [REDACTED] ACCUSED THE MILITARY OF COVERING UP THE INCIDENT AND OF COACHING WITNESSES TO THE ALLEGED MURDER OF THE TWO AMERICANS. END SUMMARY.

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MEET GENERAL MATA
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2. (U) POLOFF ACCOMPANIED MR. RICHARD BLAKE, FATHER OF DISAPPEARED AMERICAN JOURNALIST NICHOLAS BLAKE, AND HIS SON RANDY TO HUEHUETENANGO MAY 4. THE BLAKES SPOKE WITH MILITARY ZONE COMMANDER ROBERTO MATA GALVEZ FOR APPROXIMATELY NINETY MINUTES. MATA EXPRESSED HIS SORROW FOR THE DISAPPEARANCE AND PROMISED TO AID IN ANY WAY POSSIBLE IN THE INVESTIGATION. MATA, RESPONDING TO A QUESTION POSED BY RICHARD BLAKE, STATED THAT, IN HIS OPINION, THE TWO DISAPPEARED AMERICANS WERE DEAD. MATA POINTED OUT THAT NO ONE HELD HOSTAGES WITHOUT REVEALING THE INFORMATION OR OFFERING AN EXCHANGE. HE ALSO STRESSED THAT THE GUERRILLA LACKED THE RESOURCES TO HOLD PRISONERS FOR SUCH A PROTRACTED PERIOD.

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PAC MEMBER DENIES KNOWLEDGE OF MURDER OR DISAPPEARANCE
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3. (U) WHILE THE BLAKES MET MATA, POLOFF SPOKE WITH VICENTE CIFUENTES LOPEZ, A PAC MEMBER ALLEGEDLY INVOLVED IN THE MURDER OF BLAKE AND DAVIS. CIFUENTES DENIED ANY KNOWLEDGE OF THE DISAPPEARANCE, CLAIMING HE HAD NEVER VISITED EITHER LAS MAJADAS OR EL LLANO. CIFUENTES ALSO DENIED HE HAD EVER BEEN THE SECOND IN COMMAND OF THE LAS MAJADAS PAC, SAYING HE HAD SERVED IN HIS HOME OF QUILEN NOVILLO ONLY AS A PATROLLER AND DENIED SERVING IN THE LAS MAJADAS PAC. CIFUENTES CLAIMED HE HAD NEVER EVEN

4. (U) CIFUENTES REACTED STRONGLY WHEN TOLD A REWARD WAS OFFERED FOR THE REMAINS OF THE TWO AMERICANS. HE INSINUATED THE OFFER OF MONEY WAS BEING USED TO CREATE DIVISION BETWEEN THE PEOPLE OF THE AREA, AND THE MONEY WOULD ONLY SERVE TO CREATE MORE RUMORS SHEARING INNOCENT PEOPLE. CIFUENTES REFUSED TO PASS MENS OF THE REWARD TO THE PEOPLE OF HIS VILLAGE, CLAIMING HE WOULD BE SUSPECTED OF BEING THE DUPE OF OUTSIDERS IF HE DID. (COMMENT: CONOFFS INTERVIEWED A VICENTE CIFUENTES IN LAS MAJADAS IN APRIL 1985. POLOFF IS CERTAIN THAT CIFUENTES LIED THROUGHOUT THIS INTERVIEW. WHEN ASKED, CIFUENTES ADMITTED THAT HE KNEW OF NO ONE ELSE IN THE AREA WITH THE SAME NAME. CIFUENTES' STRONG REACTION WHEN TOLD OF THE REWARD SEEMS TO INDICATE HE KNOWS MORE THAN HE PROTESTS, AND THAT SOME DISCORD EXISTS AMONG THE RESIDENTS OF THE AREA NOW THAT MONEY IS BEING DANDLED FOR INFORMATION. END COMMENT.)

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INFORMANT ACCUSES MILITARY OF COVER-UP
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5. (C) BLAKES AND POLOFF VISITED THE HOME OF [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] REPEATED HIS STORY, ACCUSING THE PAC MEMBERS OF HAVING MURDERED BLAKE AND DAVIS. [REDACTED] ALSO ACCUSED THE MILITARY OF COVERING UP THE INCIDENT. WHEN QUESTIONED, [REDACTED] ADMITTED THAT, ACCORDING TO HIS SOURCES, THE

MILITARY HAD NOT BEEN DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE ALLEGED MURDER. HE STATED THAT THE EL LLANO PAC HAD CONTACTED THE ARMY DETACHMENT IN LAS MAJADAS FOR INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING BLAKE AND DAVIS. TOWNSPEOPLE TOLD [REDACTED] THAT THE DETACHMENT IN TURN CONTACTED MILITARY ZONE HEADQUARTERS IN HUEHUETENANGO WHICH HAD RESPONDED: "YOU DECIDE ("MIREN LO QUE HACEN")." THE MILITARY INSTRUCTED THE TOWNSPEOPLE TO TAKE THE AMERICANS OUT OF THE HUEHUETENANGO MILITARY ZONE INTO NEIGHBORING QUICHE DEPARTMENT. PAC MEMBERS THEN MADE THE DECISION TO KILL THE AMERICANS, ACCORDING [REDACTED] ALTHOUGH THE MILITARY WAS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE KILLINGS, [REDACTED] ACCUSED THEM OF COVERING UP THE CRIME AND COACHING WITNESSES IN RESPONDING TO FBI INVESTIGATOR AND ENBOFFS. HE ARGUED THAT THE MILITARY BELIEVED THE RESOLUTION OF THIS CASE WOULD CONTRIBUTE YET AGAIN TO ITS IMAGE AS A HUMAN RIGHTS OFFENDER, EVEN IF REGULAR MILITARY HAD NOT PULLED THE TRIGGER.

6. (U) [REDACTED] PROMISED TO FIND A VILLAGER WHO HAD REPUTEDLY HELPED BURY THE BODIES AND OFFERED TO ACCOMPANY POLOFF TO THE PLACE WHERE THEY WERE FINALLY BURIED. [REDACTED] CLAIMED THE BURIAL SITE, "EL CAMPAMENTO," WAS APPROXIMATELY THREE AND A HALF HOURS FROM HUEHUETENANGO BY FOUR WHEEL DRIVE. [REDACTED] PROMISED TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH POLOFF.

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REGIONAL PAC COMMANDER PROMISES TO AID SEARCH
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7. (U) UPON RETURNING TO GUATEMALA CITY, THE BLAKES MET WITH REGIONAL PAC COMMANDER, FELIPE ALBA. ALBA DESCRIBED GENERAL CONDITIONS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE DURING THE TIME OF THE DISAPPEARANCE. HE ADMITTED IT WAS POSSIBLE CIVIL PATROLLERS KILLED THE AMERICANS, FEARING THEY WERE GUERRILLA SYMPATHIZERS.

CONSULAR AFFAIRS
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United States Department of State
Office of FOI, Privacy, & Classification Review
Review Authority: MOSKOWITZ, SAM
Date: 07/13/96
Case ID: 95122235

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8. (U) ALBA TOLD THE BLAKES THAT HE HAD TRAVELLED RECENTLY TO EL LLANO AND DISCUSSED THE DISAPPEARANCE WITH LOCAL RESIDENTS. HE CLAIMED HE HAD DISCOVERED AN INDIVIDUAL WHO ADMITTED KNOWING SOMETHING ABOUT THE DISAPPEARANCE, BUT THAT PERSON WAS TOO AFRAID TO PROVIDE ANY DETAILS WHILE IN THE VILLAGE. ALBA SAID HE HAD INVITED HIM TO VISIT CRANTILA (ALBA'S HOMETOWN IN THE HOPES THAT HE WOULD SPEAK MORE FREELY. THE BLAKES FORMALLY ASKED ALBA TO AID THEM IN RECOVERING THE REMAINS AND ALBA RESPONDED POSITIVELY.

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COMMENT
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9. (U) POST NOTES THERE HAS BEEN A GREAT DEAL OF MOVEMENT IN THIS CASE IN THE LAST TWO MONTHS, EVER SINCE THE MILITARY PROMISED TO PROVIDE INDIVIDUALS FOR QUESTIONING. [REDACTED] ACCUSATION THAT THE MILITARY IS COVERING UP THE MATTER SEEMS A BIT STRONG. SEVERAL YEARS AGO, THE BLAKES PUBLICLY ACCUSED THE MILITARY OF MURDERING THE TWO AMERICANS AND IT WOULD SEEM THE ARMY WOULD RELISH THE OPPORTUNITY TO FOIST RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ALLEGED MURDERS FROM ITS SHOULDERS TO THOSE OF THE CIVIL PATROLLERS. THE MILITARY HAS BEEN COOPERATIVE IN THE INVESTIGATION RECENTLY, ALBEIT WITHOUT TAKING AN ACTIVE ROLE.

10. (U) ENBOFFS ARE COMMUNICATING WITH ALBA [REDACTED] AND WILL PROVIDE DEPARTMENT AND THE BLAKE FAMILY ANY NEW INFORMATION. IF MARTINEZ CAN FIND ONE OF THE PEOPLE WHO BURIED THE BODIES, AN ENBOFF WILL TRAVEL TO THE SITE TO ATTEMPT RECOVERY OF THE REMAINS. AFTER FIVE YEARS, HOWEVER, THERE IS NO CERTAINTY WE WILL FIND ANYTHING, EVEN IF WE KNOW PRECISELY WHERE TO LOOK. END COMMENT. STROCK

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