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~~C O N F I D E N T I A L~~ SECTION 01 OF 02 GUATEMALA 03216

E.O. 12356 DECL: OADR
TAGS: PINR, PINS, PREL, SHUM, SOCI, GT
SUBJ: BACKGROUND ON CASE OF HECTOR ORLANDO
- GOMEZ CALITO, MURDERED "MUTUAL SUPPORT GROUP"
- (GAM) MEMBER: EMBASSY DISCUSSIONS WITH
- TWO SOURCES

REF: GUATEMALA 3116

(C - ENTIRE TEXT.)

SUMMARY

1. ON APRIL 1 EMBOFF SPOKE WITH FR. ALAIN RICHARD, A MEMBER OF PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL, AND ON APRIL 3 WITH MRS. NINETH MONTENEGRO DE GARCIA, A DIRECTOR OF GAM, AND DISCUSSED, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THE BACKGROUND OF HECTOR GOMEZ. FR. RICHARD ALSO PROVIDED EMBOFF WITH SOME BACKGROUND ON THE CASE AND HIS IMPRESSIONS OF EVENTS. END SUMMARY.

2. ACCORDING TO MRS. GARCIA, MR. GOMEZ, A RESIDENT
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OF AMATITLAN, WAS A BAKER BY PROFESSION, WAS MARRIED AND HAD THREE CHILDREN, AGES 10, 8 AND 3. SHE SAID THAT HIS WIFE, MERCEDES DE GOMEZ, HAD NOT BEEN A

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MEMBER OF GAM, BUT THAT SHE INTENDED TO JOIN FOLLOWING HER HUSBAND'S DEATH. MRS. GARCIA SAID GOMEZ WAS NOT THE SPOKESMAN FOR THE GROUP, NOR A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, BUT HAD ACTED AS A PUBLICIST AND INFORMATION OFFICER FOR THE GROUP. SHE SAID HE HAD BEEN AFFILIATED WITH THE GROUP FOR SOME TIME, AND HAD JOINED BECAUSE HIS BROTHER, RENE ARNOLDO GOMEZ HAD DISAPPEARED ON JULY 16, 1983.

NOTE: LIST OF DISAPPEARED PREVIOUSLY PROVIDED BY GAM DID NOT LIST GOMEZ, ALTHOUGH A SECOND LIST SUPPLIED BY FR. RICHARD DOES INCLUDE HIS NAME. IT SAYS HE DISAPPEARED JULY 26, 1982, NOT 1983, AS MRS GARCIA SAYS.

3. FR. RICHARD SPOKE OF GOMEZ' ROLE ALSO. HE SAID THAT GOMEZ, WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS AN EXTREMELY NON-VIOLENT PERSON, HAD APPARENTLY ONLY RECENTLY BECOME ACTIVE IN THE GAM. HE CONFIRMED THAT GOMEZ WAS NEITHER A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOR THE GROUP'S SPOKESMAN. HE SAID THAT GOMEZ HAD SOME VISIBILITY AT SOME GROUP EVENTS, AND THAT HE AND FOUR OTHER GAM MEMBERS HAD ATTENDED A MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE GUATEMALAN CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY. RICHARD ADDED THAT NEWSPAPER CHARACTERIZATIONS OF GOMEZ AS "THE GAM LEADER" WERE INACCURATE REPORTING. GOMEZ WAS DESCRIBED IN ACCOUNTS OF THE DEATH CARRIED IN THE GUATEMALA CITY NEWSPAPERS AS THE "CHIEF LEADER" AND AS A "MANAGER" OF GAM. A NEWSPAPER ANNOUNCEMENT OF APRIL 2, SPONSORED BY GAM, HOWEVER, CALLED GOMEZ CONFIDENTIAL

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"OUR COMPANERO (ASSOCIATE)".

4. FR. ALAIN RICHARD TOLD EMBOFF THAT HE IS A FRANCISCAN PRIEST AND FRENCH CITIZEN. HE SAID HE HAD SERVED IN GUATEMALA IN THE PAST AS A PBI ADVISOR, BUT HAD JUST RECENTLY RETURNED TO THE COUNTRY. RICHARD TOLD EMBOFF THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THAT ABOUT MARCH 25, MEMBERS OF THE GOG'S DEPARTMENT OF TECHNICAL INVESTIGATIONS (DIT) HAD ASKED THE MAYOR OF THE TOWN OF AMATITLAN, WHERE GOMEZ LIVED, FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE VICTIM. THE MAYOR WAS SAID TO HAVE PROVIDED NO INFORMATION. AT ABOUT THE SAME DATE, GOMEZ'S

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HOUSE WAS REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN UNDER SURVEILLANCE BY MEN IN AUTOMOBILES. RICHARD SAID THAT ON MARCH 30 GOMEZ HAD ATTENDED A WEEKLY GAM MEETING HELD AT FBI HEADQUARTERS IN ZONE 11 OF GUATEMALA CITY. HE SAID APPARENTLY GOMEZ HAD BEEN ABDUCTED AFTER THE MEETING, BUT IT WAS NOT CLEAR IF THIS HAD OCCURRED IN GUATEMALA CITY OR IN AMATITLAN.

5. RICHARD HAD NO DOUBTS THAT THE GOG WAS DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR GOMEZ'S MURDER. HE TOLD EMBOFF THAT HE HAD SEEN GOMEZ'S BODY AND THAT IT HAD BEEN BADLY BEATEN. HE BELIEVED THAT WHILE IN THE PAST PEOPLE ABDUCTED BY THE GOG HAD BEEN KILLED QUICKLY, GOMEZ HAD BEEN SUBJECTED TO MORE ABUSE, TO MAKE A POINT TO THE GAM GROUP.

WHEN ASKED IF ONLY CERTAIN MEMBERS OF GAM HAVE BEEN SINGLED OUT TO RECEIVE THREATS OR SURVEILLANCE, HE

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RESPONDED THAT HE DID NOT THINK THAT CERTAIN ONES HAD BEEN SINGLED OUT, BUT RATHER THE ENTIRE GROUP WAS BEING WATCHED, BEGINNING WITH THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS. HE ADDED THAT THE GROUP IS NOT FEARFUL OF MENACES AND WOULD CONTINUE ITS EFFORTS.

6. FR. RICHARD SAID HE FELT THERE WERE TWO CAMPS IN THE GOG. ONE GROUP WISHED TO LET THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS CONTINUE, BUT A SECOND GROUP FELT THAT THERE WAS NO REASON TO CHANGE A FORMULA OF 30 YEARS OF OPRESSION.

7. EMBASSY OFFICERS WILL MEET GAM DIRECTORS ON MONDAY, APRIL 8.

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