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Manuals on Execution and a Disappeared Priest

Our worst expectations about the School of the Americas are officially confirmed. The Post reported Sept. 21 ["U.S. Instructed Latins on Executions, Torture," front page] that "U.S. Army intelligence manuals used to train Latin American military officers at an Army school from 1982 to 1991 advocated executions, torture, blackmail and other forms of coercion against insurgents," according to Pentagon documents.

Over the years many Honduran officers have studied at the School of the Americas, and as The Post points out, the training manuals were distributed in Honduras as well as in other countries. At least two Honduran officers who studied at the School of the Americas are alleged to have been involved in the 1983 disappearance of U.S. citizen Father James Carney.

Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martinez, supreme commander of the armed forces in 1983 when Father Carney disappeared, was deported from Honduras in 1984 and was assassinated when he later returned. Former Honduran sergeant Florencio Caballero, now in exile in Canada, stated in an interview televised by BBC in November 1987 that Gen. Alvarez gave the order to execute Father Carney.

Lt. Segundo Flores Murillo studied at the school in 1978. Mr. Caballero testified on Oct. 6, 1987, in the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in Costa Rica that Father Carney "was interrogated in Catacamas, Olancho, by Lt. Flores Murillo and two others."

Father Carney had worked in Honduras for almost 20 years. His defense of

human rights and support of the peasants' organizing efforts resulted in his deportation in 1979. He then worked as a pastor in Nicaragua. In 1983 he returned to Honduras as a chaplain to a revolutionary group; the group was captured by the Honduran army, and Father Carney was "disappeared" some time in mid-September. Although officials presented his chalice and stole to his relatives, they never explained the circumstances of his death, suggesting only that he probably starved to death in the mountains. In 1987 Florencio Caballero stated that Father Carney had been thrown to his death from a helicopter.

His body has not been found, and the Honduran military officers responsible for his death have not been identified. But the Honduran government has begun to prosecute some officers responsible for disappearances, a human rights prosecutor is investigating the case and the U.S. government has released some declassified files concerning the missing priest.

The Clinton administration must demand that the Honduran government clarify what happened to Father Carney and prosecute those responsible. Our government, in turn, must be urged to release all files regarding Father Carney and other missing persons in Honduras; to date, only some State Department documents have been released in response to an official request from the Honduran (governmental) human rights commissioner.

On Sept. 17, Sen. Paul Simon (D-Ill.) expressed his concern about Father Carney's case: "It is important that we

continue urging President Clinton to declassify all relevant documents pertaining to human rights cases in Honduras. . . . I hope that further declassification of documents can shed light on the disposition of some of these human rights cases, including Father Carney's."

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