

The Country Team

The Nation has learned the identities of the C.I.A. station chiefs who have directed the U.S. and Guatemalan agents working inside the Guatemalan Army's notorious G-2. If Congress is serious about investigating the U.S. role in Guatemala's holocaust, it should call these men to testify—publicly—along with various higher-ups.

V. Harwood "Vinx" Blocker 3d (who served from 1977 to 1980) can speak on the early years of the Gen. Lucas García regime, when the Guatemalan Army, with U.S. backing and support, staged a series of high-noon assassinations that decapitated the popular movement. His interim successor, Barry Royden (1980), can also speak to that theme, as can Robert Hultslander (1981-83), who arrived at the height of the urban terror and who ran the station as the Guatemalan Army ravaged the Mayan countryside. Vincent M. Shields (1983-84) and Jack McCavitt (1984-86) can testify to the General Mejía years, when the army perfected its web of clandestine torture centers and persecuted the relatives of the disappeared. Rafael Mariani (1987-88) can discuss the crimes of Gen. Héctor Gramajo Morales, a C.I.A. asset (Mariani told me that Gramajo had "an excellent reputation"), as can Alfonso Sapia-Bosch (1988-91), who ran the station during the assassination of anthropologist Myrna Mack, the gang-rape and torture of Sister Dianna Ortiz, the massacre at Santiago Atitlán and the execution of innkeeper Michael DeVine. Frederic Brugger (1991-93) and Dan Donahue (1993-95) can talk about the Bámaca case and also the more than 1,000 other assassinations carried out during their time. (The agents—some of whom have previously been named in print as C.I.A. men by myself and others—were identified through interviews with U.S. and Guatemalan officials and through written sources, including U.S. pay manifests.)

The point of calling these men would not be to use them as fall guys for Washington's crimes (the policy, after all, has been made by the White House, the State Department and Congress itself) but rather to illuminate—with firsthand details—how the U.S. terror system works on the ground.

Mariani, the only one of the station chiefs willing to speak to me at length on the record, inadvertently made a telling point when he said that, in Guatemala, the U.S. role was

"rather normal." What Guatemalans experience as U.S. management of a killer army, is, in U.S. Embassy terms, business as usual. Asked, for example, about U.S. relations with the G-2, Mariani said, "As always, they were good." Though he claimed that during his stint the officer payroll was not really that big, he said that, in practice, he could not recall "any aspect of the Guatemalan military being renegade or of a problem for the U.S." (As to internal embassy operations, Mariani said: "At the country team meeting I attended [presided over by the ambassador], I don't remember any sort of division. . . . We're a pretty orderly government. It gets boring at times.")

Mariani's theme of comity was echoed by General Gramajo. Gramajo, the mass killer recently found by a U.S. federal district court to have "devised and directed . . . an indiscriminate campaign of terror against civilians," told my colleague Eric Verhoogen that he was introduced to Sapia-Bosch (with whom he "did official business") by Ambassador Thomas Stroock (just as, he believes, he was introduced to Mariani by Stroock's predecessor, James Michel) and that for him there was no real distinction between the C.I.A. and the rest of the embassy. As he put it, "It's part of the country team, not separate identities." (Gramajo also said that he first met Blocker at Fort Benning, Georgia, while taking the 1960 Ranger Course at the U.S. Army Infantry School.)

The C.I.A. men are civil servants in a global U.S. terrorist net; if questioned, under oath, they could shed light on other similar operations. Among them: Chile (Royden), Argentina (Blocker), El Salvador (Brugger, McCavitt), Honduras (Shields) and Nicaragua (Sapia-Bosch), as well as the invasions of the Dominican Republic (1965, Blocker) and East Timor (1975, Shields). Sapia-Bosch worked in the White House from 1982 to 1983 as President Reagan's chief adviser on Central American affairs. During the early 1980s Brugger was the deputy chief of station in El Salvador, where, according to Ricardo Castro, a Salvadoran death squad officer he recruited, Brugger oversaw (and sat in on) interrogation training sessions (Castro was the translator for a North American C.I.A. instructor) that at times included instruction in electroshock torture techniques [see Nairn, "Confessions of a Death Squad Officer," *The Progressive*, March 1986].

It certainly appears at the moment, though, that Congress does not want such a probe. A senior investigator for the Senate Intelligence Committee says, for example, that he "hopes the C.I.A. will 'come to us' if it happens to notice that it has anyone 'suspicious' on its payroll. But he said the committee does not plan to review the full payroll itself. Likewise, a more senior investigator scoffs at the report (passed on by Representative Robert Torricelli from people inside the agency) that a colonel in the National Security Agency has been destroying files. He says the committee has to give the N.S.A. "a little leeway." "We'd rather let them collect [the documents] first, then piggyback on their efforts." The shredding report might be, he said, the idle charge of a spiteful neighbor: "guy down the street who the [N.S.A.] colonel complains doesn't cut his grass." ALLAN NAIRN

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