

GUATEMALA: below, a Prensa Libre article about the genocide and state terrorism of the past.

No justice has been done for the genocide and terrorism of the past, that left over 250,000 (mainly impoverished and Mayan) people dead; that forcibly displaced 1,000,000.

BUSINESS AS USUAL: The international community (notably: governments of USA and Canada, World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank, global resource extraction companies, etc., that all had extensive relations with the genocidal regimes of the past) have extensive on-going economic and military-security dealings with the undemocratic government of Guatemala that is doing nothing to ensure that the rule of law prevails and that justice be done for the crimes of the past.

If you want on-off this e-list: info@rightsaction.org. What to do??? See below.

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GUATEMALA: PLAN SOFIA COMES TO LIGHT

By Lorena Seijo, Prensa Libre, March 18, 2007 <http://www.prensalibre.com/pl/2007/marzo/18/166081.html>
(translation by P. Harris and E. Lawless)

*** Secret military document, in possession of the Attorney General, directly links Ríos Montt in Quiché massacres ***

Not one district attorney has had access, until now, to a classified Guatemalan Army document which tells of military operations executed during the internal armed conflict, against subversive cells or elements.

Delia Dávila, head of the prosecutor's department of human rights, within the Attorney General's office, has been the first to receive a copy of one of those plans, protected by State secrecy and which was partially obtained in a clandestine manner by plaintiffs in the genocide case pursued within Guatemala.

Despite having in her possession documents which record the existence of the Sofía Plan operations, that, together with declarations of the witnesses, directly link the Army high command and their commander-in-chief, Efraín Ríos Montt, with massacres committed predominantly within the Western region of the country from 1982 to 1983, Dávila has roundly refused to schedule an interrogation of the former head of State and his leadership.

The reason is, according to what the prosecutor (Dávila) told the presiding judge in the case, Roberto Peón, that she is not certain

that those documents are authentic. To verify her doubts, the judge ordered that on January 31 the Minister of Defense, before an open court, present the original documents of Plan Sofia and Victory 82, due to their relation to each other, since the former was derived from the latter.

In response, Ronaldo Cecilio Leiva, Minister of Defense, mailed a letter to the judge on February 8 in which he protests his disagreement with the judicial resolution, because it violates article 30 of the constitution, which protects the confidentiality of military affairs. In the missive, Leiva affirms that Plan Victory 82 is a military affair of national security, classified as secret and that Plan Sofia does not exist. To avoid the documents becoming public, he presented an appeal and claimed that these records, along with others that contain Operation Ixil Civil Affairs and Firmeza 83 plans, are off-limits.

The appeal was rejected by the judge who reminded the Minister of Defense that the accusation is not against him and summoned him for next March 26, so that he may show before the court the entirety of the plans and the original documents, to which Prensa Libre had partial access.

Coincidentally, the meeting will be held 3 days after the 25th anniversary of the coup d'état, in 1982, which brought Ríos Montt to power.

YES, IT DOES EXIST

Plan Sofia is a ramification of Plan Victory 82, the only military document to which the Commission for Historical Clarification had access, and its existence is recorded in documents in the possession of the prosecutor's department of human rights and an official letter signed by infantry colonel Francisco Angel Castellanos Gúngora.

The military maneuver concentrated its actions in the north of Quiché and was conceived of in July 1982, four months after Ríos Montt came to power, according to the notification mailed on July 14, 1982 by Castellanos Gúngora, commander of Puerto San José Esquintla military base to the commander of the Gumarkaj Task Force, assigned to Quiché. Castellanos was shot to death by masked individuals six months ago, in a laundromat in zone 19 of the capital.

The text of the notification says Plan Sofia was elaborated by this command, in fulfillment of orders by the headquarters of the Estado Mayor General of the Army. The head of the Estado Mayor of the Army at this time was Héctor López Fuentes, who in February 2002 declared before the Attorney General that he had received orders directly from then president Ríos Montt, and from the vice-minister of defense, Humberto Mejía Victores.

López Fuentes was an ideologue of Plan Victory 82, which had as its specific objective to conduct security, development and counter-subversive operations and of ideological war in their respective areas, with the objective of locating, capturing or destroying subversive groups and elements, to guarantee peace and security for the nation, in the departments of Quiché, Huehuetenango, Quetzaltenango, San Marcos, Sololá and Peten.

Since the field of action was so broad, each military command in charge of its execution had to create task forces to arrive at the final objective: to annihilate the enemy.

Like that Plan Sofia was born, which contained the specific operations to be executed in Quiché that were assigned to the Gumarkaj Task Force, which operated in this department. The report "Guatemala, Nunca Más" assigned responsibility to the Army for 59 massacres in this area, only during 1982.

The activation of Gumarkaj is documented, because in Plan Victory 82 it specifies that the involved commands will report to the Estado Mayor General of the Army, eight days after having received the plan, the composition and devices of their units.

It additionally orders that they submit the confidential reports by way of official S-3 to the command, nomenclature that appears in almost all the confidential documents that are part of Plan Sofia.

The task of Victory 82, according to the registers, was to deny guerrilla access to the civil population, those who nourish them and within whom they hide, and the tactic to annihilate them, the destruction of the guerrilla forces is the mission. The control of terrain is the means for completing this mission.

The command that was assigned to Plan Sofia was due to exterminate the subversive elements in the area of Quiché. For this they utilized soldiers from the Manuel Lisandro Barillas General Military Brigade, from Quetzaltenango; from the Mariscal Gregorio Solares Military Zone, from Huehuetenango; the Gumarkaj Task Force, from Quiché, and the Guatemalan Air Force.

Among the recommendations posed by the task force charged with executing the plan, one finds: carry cash, immediately inform about the location of the enemy and that they respect the life of women, children to the extent possible.

Annex A of the intelligence summary, which contains the details of Plan Sofia, says: "Subversive groups currently operating to the Northwest of the municipality of Nebaj, in the department of Quiché, have intensified their activities, owing principally to the foreign support they have received."

In addition, the intelligence summary mentions two combatant guerrilla fronts: Afganistan, located in Paraxtut and Río Negro; and Fronterizo, located in Palob, Sumal Hill and Bichocal Hill, all in Quiché. Each front was made up of 30 men. The report acknowledges that in the second front there were women and children as well as three foreigners, most likely Cubans or Nicaraguans.

The official responsible for writing intelligence reports, known only as S-2, clarified: "When the inhabitants of the region see Guatemalan Army units approaching they hide in caves or ditches, usually located 500-600 meters outside of the village, normally between cornfields or near rivers.

The inhabitants of the region have been well trained by the subversives (guerrillas) and it is difficult to extract the information we need from them."

The secret document also includes a map with coordinates of the towns of Ilom, Nebaj, Chiantla, and Soloma.

DIARY OF OPERATIONS

On August 5, 1982 Francisco Ingel Castellanos mailed an operations report from Nebaj to the commander of the Huehuetenango military zone, containing details of military operations carried out during the second week of July in the same year.

The prosecutors' office also has in its possession the diary of operations of Patrol 3510. This diary recounts the daily procedures of this Army Patrol Unit, including dates and times of its actions:

"August 10, 1982: Upon arrival in the village of Tzijulché we came across two tied up dogs whose barking threatened to give away our presence. We killed one and hanged the other ... a list of dead bodies was also found.

"August 11: Discovered a ditch at coordinates 9160-1040 that contained a cache of beans, corn, chickpeas ... registered the house of Pedro Guzaro Brito, in which signed papers with orders from the EGP (Guerrilla Army of the Poor) were found. The house was burnt and the pigs were killed, a PRB-8 hand grenade placed underneath one of them."

The diary also relates that during this same day two more food caches and another house were burnt despite having made no contact with the enemy."

It also says, "We discovered the family of Diego Cobo, 11 in all, who had been hiding, we brought them with us."

Two days later, the 13th of August, the report notes: "We were disposed to send the family of Diego Cobo to Nebaj but first they had

to organize their village to hand it over to the Army. The report also relates that in the village of Xeipum the soldiers found papers with Level I Political information belonging to Roberto.

The final report from August 15, recounts that during operations towards the village of Palob, near the hill of Ixconcabal, "We were ambushed by the enemy, we counter-attacked without success and retreated."

AGREEMENT WITH REPORTS

The Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH) registered 626 massacres during the rule of Rios Montt that could be attributed to the military of paramilitary forces. In 63% of the massacres documented by the CEH the army acted alone.

In the prosecution order of Rios Montt and Mejía Victores, released by the Spanish National Court in July of 2006, it was determined that both these men share responsibility for the massacre in the village of San Francisco Javier, Nebaj, Quiché, on August 15, 1982. On this day 30 people were massacred by the Army with firearms and machetes.

Also disclosed with the international arrest warrants is information about what happened on September 9, 1982 in the village of Vibitz, Nebaj, where 150 soldiers killed 17 people. Finally, the prosecution order speaks of the massacre perpetrated in the village Agua Fría, Chicamán, Quiché, where the Army killed 92 people on September 14, 1982.

These military operations could form part of Plan Sofía. They were carried out in the time period and geographical regions assigned to this military operation.

The Spanish prosecution order also details that the people who were able to survive these massacres had to flee into the mountains, as the army had already burnt their houses and destroyed their harvests. In Quiché alone there were more than 24,000 displaced persons.

On May 3, 2000 survivors of the massacres perpetrated in Baja Verapaz and Quiché filed a case with the Attorney General alleging genocide. Neither this case nor any other subsequently filed by survivors of the massacres have been resolved, despite the 150 witnesses whom have given testimony and evidence to the existence of military plans directed at the extermination of subversive groups and of people affiliated with them.

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WHAT TO DO:

RA channels your tax-deductible donations to community-based, mainly

Mayan groups, throughout Guatemala, that are working, at great risk of repression, for justice for the genocide and acts of state terrorism of the past.

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