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GUATEMALA'S DISAPPEARED  
1977-86

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Summary

Guatemala is a violent society. The conscious acceptance and use of violence as an instrument of politics contribute to the extraordinary levels of murder, kidnapping and disappearances. Statistics on homicides reveal that Guatemala has a murder rate almost equivalent to that of the rest of Latin America combined. Young males are the most likely to be victims.

Guatemala's kidnap victims are more often killed and their bodies seldom found. While criminal activity accounts for a small percentage of the cases, and from time to time individuals "disappear" to go elsewhere, the security forces and rightist paramilitary groups are responsible for most kidnappings. Insurgent groups do not now normally use kidnapping as a political tactic, although they did resort to kidnapping for ransom in their formative years.

First used systematically by the security forces against the Communist Party and members of the moderate left beginning in 1966, the practice of kidnappings became institutionalized over time. Some 6500 persons have been kidnapped or disappeared since 1977, far short of the 38,000 claimed by critics of the previous Guatemalan governments. The average number of monthly kidnappings peaked in 1984 under the regime of General Mejia. At first security forces utilized kidnappings to intimidate the left and to convince potential guerrilla supporters to remain neutral. Kidnappings of rural social workers, medical personnel, and campesinos became common between 1979-83. Often innocent victims were accused of being insurgents by military commissioners, other village leaders or an individual's personal enemies or business competitors. Many of these accused would soon join the ranks of the disappeared. In the cities, out of frustration from the judiciary's unwillingness to convict and sentence insurgents, and convinced that the kidnapping of suspected insurgents and their relatives would lead to a quick destruction of the guerrilla urban networks, the security forces began to systematically kidnap anyone suspected of insurgent connections. This tactic was successful. Most of the insurgent infrastructure in Guatemala City was eliminated by 1984.

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Although the number of incidences dropped during the last year of the government of General Mejia Victores and continued to decline under incumbent President Vinicio Cerezo, disappearances continue. Ex-detectives and other security forces personnel, rural landowners, and individual military officials continue to kidnap for financial gain, or to eliminate personal and ideological opponents. The continuing economic recession will make kidnapping for ransom attractive. Efforts by labor and campesino groups to exercise their Constitutionally-guaranteed rights may stimulate additional kidnappings by those who feel threatened by these efforts.

Economic development and judicial reform, hopefully, will eventually lead to a reduction in the rate of disappearances. We can also help the police to build public confidence in their discredited institution through provision of training assistance. If this can be achieved, the public may begin to cooperate with the police authorities. Through existing programs we can also help Cerezo reorganize the judiciary and help protect the judges who must prosecute kidnappers. We can also support the work of the Human Rights Ombudsman (a Constitutionally mandated office) by inviting him to the United States,

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While this study reveals that our monitoring of human rights is good, we have failed in the past to adequately grasp the magnitude of the problem. Better collection of data will be necessary to ensure that our policy in the future is based on accurate information. We should take steps to ensure that verified information collected by non-governmental organizations on human rights abuses is factored into our analysis.

End Summary

A Violent Society

Guatemala is one of the world's most violent societies. There is no country in this hemisphere that surpasses Guatemala's homicide and disappearance rates. In 1981 (the latest year for which Pan American Health Organization homicide

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statistics are available) Guatemala's murder rate of ~~104 per~~  
~~100,000~~ population was equivalent to the combined rates of all  
Latin America, Canada and Puerto Rico combined, and was ten  
times the U.S. national rate (and triple the rate for black  
American males). Violence affecting young Guatemalan males is  
much worse than even the statistics indicate. In 1981, for  
instance, ~~104 per 100,000~~, a rate seventeen times the U.S. murder rate for  
young males, and almost four times El Salvador's. In 1981, 36%  
of the deaths recorded in this age group were the result of  
murders. Worse, the incidence of murder has steadily increased  
(Appendix A). Homicides as a percentage of all recorded  
Guatemala deaths soared from 0.3% in 1963 to 11.3% in 1981.  
The rise in violent deaths has occurred at a time when overall  
death rates have declined dramatically due to improved health  
and nutrition, and when comparable violence rates in  
neighboring Latin countries have slowed appreciably, or  
declined dramatically.

#### Roots of Guatemalan Violence

Guatemala's high violence levels cannot be accounted for  
by economic or political variables. Equally poor nations in  
Africa, Asia, and Latin America have lower violence levels. The  
explanation for Guatemala's high levels of violence probably is  
rooted in cultural and sociological factors unique to  
Guatemala. Guatemala is distinguished from other Central  
American nations by the duality of its culture where a wealthy  
ladino minority lives side by side with an impoverished Indian  
majority largely marginalized from national political and  
economic life. Nowhere else in Central America does this  
ethnic diversity exist. The use of violence to settle disputes  
of almost any nature is accepted in Guatemala's indigenous  
culture.

Guatemala is also distinguished from the rest of Central  
America by less interaction between the urban elite and the  
Indians. The ladino elite in Guatemala has been estranged from  
the many Indian groups for centuries by language, culture and  
geography. Poor communication with the Indians, lacking common  
bonds and shared experiences, the elites have tended to treat  
Indians as a population to be exploited as well as feared. The  
plantation system which historically generated Guatemala's  
exports and wealth has relied on Indian labor to function.

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Indeed, until 1944, Guatemalan law allowed landowners to obtain free labor from Indians. Attempts by Indians or other workers to bargain collectively, create unions or otherwise improve their lives have usually been countered with violence.

Fear of revolution stems from the Arbenz period when the first political efforts to involve peasants and Indians in national life began in earnest. Many in Guatemala believed that the Arbenz government was close to being dominated by communists. Following Arbenz' ouster in 1954 saving the country from communism and personal self interest thus blended to form a psychology conducive to supporting physical repression of workers and peasants in the name of anti-communism.

Politics and commerce have been the monopoly of the small, privileged urban and landowning elites. Guatemala's geography and limited infrastructure and communications in many rural areas have led to the existence of many quasi-autonomous rural fiefdoms. Until recently the central government's authority and presence did not reach far into the rural areas. The definition and execution of "justice" was local and personal. By and large, the poor have not had access to the material benefits of society, or the protection of formal legal structures. Landowners, politicians and businesses have traditionally tolerated violence -- often hiring persons to kill enemies. They have also not hesitated to direct the violence at one another. In addition, the poor themselves have never had faith in a judicial system where wealth influences the judicial process, or where judges can be intimidated. The result has been the widespread use of violence and other extra-legal methods to achieve goals and satisfy a primitive sense of justice within and between classes.

## Disappearances

In addition to the high murder rates, Guatemala also registers the highest number of disappearances, abductions and missing in the Western Hemisphere. Only pre-Alfonso Argentina approximates Guatemala's levels of kidnappings. Abductions in

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Guatemala are carried out for numerous reasons; including intimidation of political opponents, criminal or political ransom, and as part of counterinsurgency operations. To a certain extent, kidnappings are also staged to cover incorporation into the insurgents or defection to the security forces; to mask trips abroad for insurgency training; or mistaken for migration abroad for economic reasons.

Unfortunately, ~~there is no reliable data available~~ ~~statistics available on political violence in Guatemala.~~ No human rights groups operate within Guatemala to collect accurate data. The Catholic Church does not keep count of even catechists or priests killed or kidnapped. As far as we know, no defectors from the GOG have come forth to speak of their involvement in government-sponsored disappearances. In late 1985 the army moved the "Archivos" (a secret group in the President's office that collected information on insurgents and operated against them) to the D-2 section of the military and to dismiss personnel who had worked with these records of government security activities. Therefore, information verification by the new civilian government will be difficult. The Guatemalan press adequately covers urban violence, but no attempt is made to distinguish criminal from political violence. Rural violence is under-reported. Few human rights groups keep individual case files, and there is occasional duplication of data and exaggeration by human rights groups who, at times, accept any account as true. ~~Data collected by Embassy Guatemala is, justifiably or not, dismissed by most human rights groups as incomplete, biased or distorted.~~

*True*

Unable to properly quantify the violence and unwilling to accept USG data, many outside human rights and "lobbying" groups have simply invented figures to fit their needs. For example, Lord Avebury of the British Parliament, after a short visit to Guatemala for the British Inter-Parliamentary Group in early 1985, claimed the Guatemalan Bishops in September 1984 had catalogued 38,000 disappeared since 1950. Enfoprensa, the Guatemalan Human Rights Commission, and other groups linked to the insurgents quickly adopted this figure. A spokesman for the Guatemalan Catholic Church, contacted by our Embassy in March 1986 stated that the Bishops had actually referred to 38,000 displaced Guatemalans in Mexican refugee camps, not disappeared.

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With a new civilian government in Guatemala now dedicated to human rights improvements, it is important to be able to determine human rights trends. Insurgent groups and organizations linked to them and critics of U.S. policy can be expected to argue, for different reasons, that the Cerezo government has not improved the human rights situation. Our ability to provide military aid and higher levels of economic assistance to democratic Guatemala will depend in large part on our ability to persuade skeptics in Congress and the media that improvements are in fact taking place. This will require a credible data base on which all interested parties can agree. To that end we need to marshal all the available data on violence in Guatemala. A data bank is also necessary to test the accuracy and degree of completeness of our monthly human rights reports, and to serve as an analytical tool for those looking for patterns and information on specific cases of disappearances.

With these goals and purposes in mind, we have produced for the first time a comprehensive list of disappeared, kidnapped and missing persons from 1977 thru 1985, using all known sources of published data (Appendix B). These sources include the Embassy's human rights summaries and reports from Amnesty International, the OAS, the Guatemalan Human Rights Commission and affiliated groups, WOLA, COHA, Enfoprensa, the Mutual Support Group, and others. Our methodology and assumptions are explained in Appendix C.

~~Our estimate is that about 6500 persons were reported kidnapped or missing during the period 1977-1985. We believe these numbers understate the actual number of kidnappings in Guatemala.~~  
This conclusion is based on the high percentage of cases in which only one reporting agency had the data, which suggests that many cases go unreported. Secondly, a review of recent depositions accompanying political asylum requests reveals that almost none of the kidnappings of relatives reported by the applicants were ever counted by outside monitors. Families of the missing and abducted commonly prefer not to go to the press, although on occasion people pay a newspaper to run a story in hopes of getting their relative back. But the majority of rural residents are illiterate or too poor to do this or anything else. Likewise, most relatives see no purpose in informing the police or military of a kidnapping since they usually believe the government is responsible. They also fear

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becoming a victim themselves. In rural areas, the campesinos have learned not to complain, and lacking recourse, they say little or leave the area, or, as in the past, join the guerrillas for self-protection.

#### Who Are the Victims?

Guatemala is agricultural, rural and about 50% Indian. Thus it could be expected that the majority of the kidnap victims would be ladino campesinos and Indian farmers. Based on an analysis of the abduction cases reported by our Embassy during the past 50 months (Appendix D) members of these groups were the principal kidnap victims in cases the victim's occupation and a political motivation was determined. However, given the failure of relatives to report incidents and identifying data to the press, in 43% of the cases we were not able to ascertain the victim's occupation.

Students and teachers together comprised the next most frequent target. Without intending to downplay the seriousness of the incidents, we believe human rights groups have exaggerated the frequency of kidnappings of labor leaders, students and teachers. Lord Averbury, for example, claims 15,000 students were killed or disappeared from 1979-80.

Based on our analysis of named cases, we estimate that 88% of the victims were men. Using 1984 and 1985 Embassy data and statistics compiled by the Guatemalan Human Rights Commission (an insurgent front) it appears that about one half of the kidnappings occurred in or around Guatemala City. A third of the incidents took place in the highland departments (see map at Appendix E).

#### Who are the Kidnappers?

In the majority of individual cases it is not possible to assign specific responsibility for a kidnapping. The perpetrators do not routinely leave "calling cards" or boast of their actions. Unlike the 1960s and 1970s, death squads and guerrilla groups do not claim credit for kidnappings or murders which they carry out.

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Although culpability in specific cases is not usually identified, credible asylum depositions, accounts of escapees, and eyewitness reports suggest that government security forces were behind the majority of the 6515 abductions between 1977-85. An analysis of the cases of the 637 persons subject to the Special Tribunals set up by the military in July 1982 reveals that 22 persons which the government admitted holding had been reported kidnapped previously. Another 8 released following abolishment of the Tribunals in 1983 were later kidnapped.

The insurgents have kidnapped businessmen, farmers, farm administrators, and government agents in the past, usually for ransom or to frighten others from working for the authorities. The guerrillas still kidnap a few military commissioners in isolated rural areas, but normally they kill opponents outright. In our opinion the insurgents are now relatively minor players in kidnappings.

We believe criminal gangs composed of off-duty police and detectives, an occasional army officer, and former members of security forces and bodyguards are, or have been, behind a significant, but unquantifiable number of cases. That President Cerezo believed it necessary to abolish the detective corps and reorganize the police command is an indication of the role of these organizations in human rights abuses and crimes. Police salaries are low, training is minimal, and corruption is rampant among the country's police forces. Judicial and police inefficiency and corruption stimulate and reinforce private systems of "justice", causing a spiral of violence in the society. At one point in 1983 it was said a contract for a simple murder could be purchased for 25 quetzales.

Given Guatemala's visible income disparities, it is to be expected that common criminals also resort to abductions to raise funds. An American resident of Antigua was kidnapped for ransom in 1984 by a gang that included a former priest. Kidnapping is one area in an otherwise moribund economy which has grown regularly in recent years. Wealthy families employ bodyguards as a matter of course. Some have kidnap insurance. Since policies have standard clauses forbidding publicity, a systematic bias of underreporting criminal kidnappings is built into the system.

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The inescapable conclusion is that most of the disappeared have in fact been kidnapped by security forces. Further, the various security forces of the capital and other urban areas were the only bodies capable of widespread abductions, or technically complicated murders or abductions such as the assassination from a moving vehicle of retired General Manuel Sosa Avila in March 1985 on the capital's main thoroughfare as he was returning from Sunday lunch with his daughter and grandchildren; past guerrilla kidnappings in the cities were almost always for ransom and difficult to carry out successfully.

#### Modus Operandi

The 1985 OAS Human Rights Commission report on Guatemala provides the most thorough account of the modus operandi of kidnapers in Guatemala. Briefly, groups of from four to twelve heavily armed individuals usually dressed in civilian clothes snatch individuals off the street or from their homes. The kidnapers often arrive in private cars or vans with polarized windows. In street abductions, the kidnapers know who their target is, either because an informer or another kidnap victim who knows the victim is in the vehicle. At times the neighborhood is surrounded by mobile police units or foot patrolmen while the operation is underway. The police never interfere and rarely are these abductions registered in police files. Often the kidnapers identify themselves as members of the police or DIT detective force to passers-by or the victims' relatives. Most seizures at home take place at night. The abductors usually ask by name for the victim, and if he or she is not home, usually wait. Shortly after a kidnapping, men dressed in civilian clothes arrive at the victim's house, and using the victim's keys, search the premises for specific items. Rural abductions are believed to be carried out by military forces or paramilitary groups linked with specific military units.

Once captured, the victim is taken to interrogation centers --at military bases, police stations or safe houses-- where information about alleged connections with insurgents is extracted through torture. The victim's family and friends never receive an official notification of the abduction and usually never ascertain with certainty whether the relative is dead or alive. Police and military units routinely deny having held the victim. Families resort to unofficial connections

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to obtain information about the initial whereabouts of the victim from relatives in the police or security forces, or from friends with official connections.

To our knowledge, no member of the military, police, security forces, or paramilitary groups has ever been prosecuted, convicted, and sentenced for participation in politically-related abductions, although cases of arrest of off-duty security force personnel caught while engaged in free-lance abductions for profit have been reported in the press. At most, military personnel may be disciplined by dismissal from the army. This record gives rise to the pervasive belief in Guatemalan society of a police and military above the law and the arbitrary and capricious use of government power.

#### Fate of the Disappeared

Very few of those abducted in Guatemala ever reappear alive. Most are killed after several hours or days of interrogation. In the past, in cases where security forces were involved, victims were held long enough to extract information valuable to the counter-insurgency effort, then shot. (There is no evidence of the existence of long-term political prisoners held in clandestine facilities.) In many cases the victims were tortured to obtain information (Appendix F provides details.). The Guatemala authorities in the past have alleged that many of the missing have gone abroad for training in Soviet bloc countries, or to the United States as illegal aliens. This is probably true in only a few cases. One political asylum applicant stated that before coming to the United States he had "disappeared" in order to receive EGP training. However, we believe such occurrences are few and far between, and statistically insignificant. [REDACTED]

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Guatemalan government spokesmen in the past have claimed that many disappearances are really cases where persons have gone to the United States for economic motives without telling their families. We have detected no evidence that this accounts for an appreciable number of cases of disappearance. We do not see why an intending illegal alien would fake a

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disappearance or fail to notify his family of plans to leave Guatemala for the U.S. While Guatemalans come to the US for economic reasons, none of the 863 political asylum applications (many frivolous) examined during the past year had been reported as disappeared.

Not all kidnapping cases end in death. Abductions perpetrated by criminals or moonlighting police often end with the victim being released after payment of ransom. In other cases, the security forces may decide to "turn" an insurgent for use as a guide or informer. In still other cases, individuals mistakenly kidnapped are released after the abductors realized their mistake and the victim promises not to discuss the incident. There have been cases where the kidnap victim escaped to tell of the experience. However, the Guatemalan press rarely follows up on earlier reporting, and relatives almost never notify the press when their kin are located or reappear. Both factors contribute to the underreporting, in absolute numbers, of violent acts based only on public sources. Bodies located alongside the road are often unidentifiable and most relatives of the missing probably never learn definitively what happened to the victim.

#### Political Roots of Violence

During the early 1960s there were few kidnappings. In 1963 only two cases were reported in El Imparcial. Between 1964-1967 a total of 27 were reported kidnapped. The first recorded case of systematic kidnapping occurred in Guatemala in the spring of 1966 when, weeks before the Peralta military government turned the government over to the elected civilian government of Mendez Montenegro. Security services kidnapped 28 leftists, communist students and intellectuals, and politicians who had been arrested over the previous several months. Among those disappeared and later executed clandestinely was the head of the orthodox communist party, Leonardo Castillo Flores. His death radicalized the party and helped fuel the FAR insurgency during 1966-68. The purpose of the disappearances--to intimidate the left from involvement in politics--was to become one of the principal goals of such tactics by government agents and paramilitary groups linked with right wing political parties like the MLN.

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As the insurgent movement gained force in the 1970s, the security forces began to use kidnappings to an ever greater extent, particularly in urban areas and against labor leaders, students, academics and political opposition leaders. Increasingly it appears that the purpose was to extract information that might lead to the discovery of urban terrorist cells. The tactic apparently accomplished its intended purpose -- by 1984 insurgent networks in the capital had been decimated. At the height of this repression (1979-1982), many were also simply murdered, intimidation being the intended goal. A side effect was the death of many innocent persons who were accused of being insurgents by vengeful neighbors or others eager to eliminate personal, business or political rivals by proxy.

#### Recent Trends in Kidnapping

We have arranged our data chronologically in order to reconstruct the monthly totals from 1977 and to analyze the trends under the regimes of Generals Lucas Garcia, Rios Montt, and Mejia Victores. Our purpose was also to see how accurate our monthly human rights reports have been and whether the trends we have seen and acted upon were accurate in retrospect. Through this approach we also wanted to see how well other groups did in identifying trends and monthly totals.

#### Major findings:

Under the last three military governments the rate of reported kidnappings has increased, according to our statistics (Appendix H). The increase may reflect more thorough reporting of incidents through time by a larger number of monitoring groups, hence we cannot be sure whether the increase is real or only apparent (see Appendix C for a discussion of methodology).

During the Lucas regime, from July 1, 1978 through March 23, 1982, some 2261 persons (an average of 1.62 daily) were reported missing or kidnapped. General Rios Montt was in office from March 23, 1982 to August 8, 1983. During his administration the daily incidence of abductions rose to 1.73 (866 cases). General Oscar Mejia served from August 1983 until

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January 14, 1986. From August 8, 1983 through the end of this study (December 31, 1985) reports of kidnappings rose substantially to 3.29 daily (2883 cases).

The apparent increase in the rate of abductions under General Mejia may have stemmed from the abolition of the Special Tribunals created shortly after Rios Montt took office. Following the promulgation of a one-month amnesty, on July 1, 1982 Rios Montt announced the formation of these secret military courts to try suspected insurgents. The Tribunals operated until September 1, 1983, when, following widespread international criticism, General Mejia abolished them. While the Tribunals functioned it appears the rate of kidnappings dropped. For instance, the monthly kidnapping rate in 1981 was 74. In the first half of 1982, before the creation of the Tribunals, the reported monthly rate was 68. During the rest of 1982, the rate dropped to 50 cases a month. During the eight months of 1983 that the Tribunals functioned, the kidnapping rate dropped to 43 monthly. After the abolishment of the Tribunals, the kidnapping rate rose again to an average of 109 each month. The month after the Tribunals ceased, 183 cases were reported, the fourth highest monthly figure in our study.

Only a small percentage of those processed through the Tribunals were reported kidnapped. During this period, the security forces often announced the arrest of insurgent suspects, a break with past practice. Following the elimination of the Special Tribunals, it seems that the security forces simply began to kidnap suspected insurgents, including some who had passed through the Tribunals and been released.

Throughout 1984 the abduction rate remained high -- 137 cases a month. However, in 1985 the rate plummeted to slightly over 60 cases a month. This drop may reflect the concern of the Mejia government to improve the human rights situation as it prepared to turn power over to an elected civilian government in early 1985.

#### Prospects for Future

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## US Policy

That there is a gap between the rhetoric of justice and the reality of violence in Guatemalan society is not surprising. That there are as many dedicated lawyers, jurists and police still committed to working toward the establishment of an impartial system of justice after Lucas Garcia and the violence of the early 1980s is what is astounding. It is this seed which U.S. policy should be directed toward nurturing in the coming years.

What role, if any, can U.S. policy play in reducing or ending disappearances in Guatemala? There is little or nothing we can do to stop kidnappings by criminal gangs or the insurgents. On the other hand, there are a few steps we can take to help eliminate officially-sanctioned abductions or operations by paramilitary groups. First, we should help President Cerezo rebuild public confidence in the police if Guatemalans are to eliminate the practice of disappearances. Honest and competent police will be needed to resolve kidnappings by extra-legal groups that will try to continue the practice of abduction for political reasons. Today the citizenry is afraid to go to the police with information about abductions since the prevalent belief is that members of the police and the army are responsible. There have been instances when a concerned citizen bringing eyewitness information to police attention is himself kidnapped.

The Cerezo government is committed to establishing a fully functioning justice system. However, judges as well as witnesses are still subject to intimidation and newly-appointed court officials may remain reluctant to prosecute kidnappers, especially if they are thought to have powerful connections, among military officers, politicians and businessmen. (Although the new Constitution guarantees judges lifetime tenure, judicial officials recognize that coups occur and new Constitutions follow.) We should have information to share with Cerezo when the first important case occurs. In El Salvador, under AID auspices, we have provided funds to protect judges and witnesses. We should ask Cerezo whether he is interested in establishment of such a program in Guatemala, and how else we might assist him in gaining control over his security forces.

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The Guatemalan Constitution provides the legal framework for protection of human rights. A human rights ombudsman-- selected by Congress-- is established for the first time to monitor human rights and report on such abuses. The Guatemalan Congress has yet to select the ombudsman or write the law guiding the work and the immunities that the individual must have to be effective. We should assist this individual in every way possible. In particular, we should invite the person to Washington at an early opportunity to show high level support and to indicate our interest in close cooperation. A copy of our catalog of the disappeared should be shared with the ombudsman. Embassy officials should maintain close liaison, sharing information on cases.

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While the left will remain a threat to the Cerezo government, the far right and unrepentant elements of the army and police may be an even greater obstacle to eliminating kidnapping as an internal security tactic. We need much better understanding of the plans and operations of such groups. A few highly publicized disappearances and killings of GAM members or others could easily undermine our efforts in Congress to assist Guatemala economically and militarily. As Cerezo moves forward with his reform program, and as labor attempts to assert its rights under the Constitution, extremists can be expected to react violently as in the past. U.S. citizens could become objects of attack if we are perceived as contributing to the reforms through our aid programs.

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Finally, we should be more rigorous and systematic in using our ability to deny visas to individuals known to be involved in violence. This will require better intelligence on death squad activists (such as those linked to the MLN and PUA political parties) than we now have. We also should extradite persons wanted for violence in Guatemala.

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Our study of the disappeared indicates that, of all of the human rights monitoring groups, we did the best job of collecting data and reporting trends. However, we failed to capture the magnitude of the problem in absolute terms in our monthly human rights reports, reporting only 30% of the actual number of cases that occurred from 1981-1985 that eventually came to light (Appendix H). We need to make greater efforts to incorporate other organization's data into our own analysis, particularly information from Amnesty, the OAS and church groups. Although closely linked to the ORPA guerrillas, the Guatemalan Human Rights Commission data should also be incorporated into the Mission's human rights data bank. We did not find evidence that the GHRC invented any of the cases it cited, although it did attribute all cases to government security forces.

We should share case data so that other independent, responsible monitoring groups will have greater confidence in our annual reports and our ability to state the facts accurately. We should also share this information with our European allies, and in turn request their data on human rights abuses. Our Embassy in Guatemala should canvas religious, labor and other contacts monthly for case information to include in its violence reports. Regular monthly meetings with Western European diplomats to share data and impressions might help build the confidence of our allies in our data and sources.

Embassy Guatemala should also be encouraged to hire an extra local employee to establish contacts in rural areas and report on human rights trends outside Guatemala city. Consideration should be given to delaying the monthly human rights reports somewhat and classifying them in order to incorporate data from sources other than the newspapers. At present most Mission elements do not contribute data on human rights violations to the political section for inclusion in its monthly violence wrapup. All Embassy elements should contribute information in their possession to the compilation of the monthly assessment, and at year end revised annual statistics should be issued for use in the annual human rights report.

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APPENDIX C: SOURCES, METHODOLOGY, ASSUMPTIONS

A. SOURCES:

Information used in this report was drawn from all known sources of published data on Guatemalan human rights abuses. We do not believe we have missed any significant blocks of cases, although some individual published accounts may have been inadvertently overlooked. Our sources are listed below, followed by the letter we used to identify the source at the far right in the statistical printout (Appendix B).

A = "Mutual Support Group" (GAM): This organization, comprised of the relatives of missing persons, presented a compilation of names of "persons detained and later disappeared" from 1980 through May 1985. The list was published on June 7, 1985 in the Guatemalan press to mark GAM's first anniversary. The same list was supplied to the Embassy by the OAS.

B = List of "The Detained/Disappeared" published by "Popular and Democratic Organizations" of the Costa Rican and International Community". This list appeared in the Guatemalan press on April 8, 1985 and named 60 organizations, plus a number of individuals, as sponsors. The organizations included the "Commission for the Defense of Human Rights in Central America," "Patriotic Youth of Costa Rica," "National Movement of the Revolutionary Youth of the PRI of Mexico," "National Revolutionary Movement of El Salvador," "Executive Committee of the National Association of Public Employees," "Costa Rican Association of Jesuits," "Association of Bible Seminary Students," "Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences," and the "Costa Rican Committee of Solidarity with the Chilean People." The "B" list also includes cases from the "Pax Christi International Organization" as presented in the "Human Rights Reports-4, 'Guatemala,' published in Antwerp, Belgium in 1982: The report was based on "an inquiry mission to Central America, which stayed in the countries of the area from June 20 to July 22, 1981."

C = Listing from the "Guatemalan Human Rights Commission": incidents published in "Monthly Report on Violations of Human Rights in Guatemala" covering 1984 through July 1985. (note: The GHRC is an ORPA (Guatemalan insurgent organization) front group headquartered in Mexico City)

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D = "Parliamentary Human Rights Group": Cases published in "Bitter And Cruel..." an interim report of the Parliamentary Human Rights Group, following a mission to Guatemala in October 1984. The report was compiled on the basis of a private visit by two members of the British Parliamentary Human Rights Group (PHRG), Lord Avebury (member of the House Of Lords and chairman of the PHRG) and Anthony Lloyd (Labor member of Parliament and member of the PHRG). They visited Guatemala from October 15 to October 21, 1984. The report also is said to have been "supplemented by testimonies taken by two researchers working for the PHRG in the month of October 1984."

E = American Embassy, Guatemala: monthly reports prepared by the Political Section and by the Regional Security Office, December 1980 through 1985.

F = Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IAHRC) of the Organization of the American States (OAS): "Special Report on the Human Rights Situation in the Republic of Guatemala," published by the Secretary General of the OAS at Washington on October 3, 1985. (The special commission visited Guatemala between May 3 and May 10, 1985).

G = Rand Corporation publication, "Chronology of Actions by Guatemalan Groups - 1981-1982"

H = Amnesty International: Cases from July 1978 through 1980, published in "Guatemala: The 'Disappeared' Since July 1978," by A I.'s international secretariat, at London, February, 1981. Also, from "Guatemala: A Government Program Of Political Murder, An Amnesty Intenational Report," published in London, 1981.

I = Mission of the United Kingdom, Guatemala: Accounts of abductions and other acts of violence as compiled from newspaper accounts by the British Interest Section of the Swiss Embassy in Guatemala from 1984 through 1985.

J = Amnesty International: Incidents which occurred from 1982 through 1985 as reported in A.I. publications: 1) "Amnesty International Report 1982: A Survey of AI's Work On Political Imprisonment, Torture and Executions" 2) "Guatemala Update: Amnesty International's Human Rights Concerns in Guatemala Since the August 1983 Coup Which Brought General Oscar Humberto Mejia Victores To Power", published December 22, 1983 at London. 3) "Disappearances' in Guatemala: Under The Government of General Oscar Humberto Mejia Victores (August 1983-January 1985)," published March 1985 by Amnesty

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International USA 3) "Memorandum to the Government of Guatemala Following an AI Mission to the Country in April 1985," published January 1986 at New York 4) Cases also reported in "Urgent Action" and "Central American Special Action" (CASA) reports of Amnesty International, as reviewed at AI's Washington office in March 1986. Amnesty notes that some of its accounts have come from the newspaper (AI lists a total of 812 individual victims).

K = Political Asylum Applications: received by INS: Cases are filed by the "A" number of the principal applicant in whose deposition the allegations were made..

L = Special Tribunals: "General Resume" of "The Cases Before the Special Tribunals From Their Initiation Until August 31, 1983."

M = Inter-American Human Rights Commission (IAHRC) 1984 Habeas Corpus List: "Presented before the Guatemalan Supreme Court of Justice during 1984" (536 names). The list is included in the OAS document "Special Report on the Human Rights Situation in the Republic of Guatemala," of October 3, 1985

N=WOLA & NISGUA: Cases cited in "A Compilation of All Massacres Recorded After March 23, 1982 According to Documentation in the Possession of WOLA & NISGUA." Cases are from March-June 1982. Sources, listed on last page of the document, include news sources in Guatemala and Mexico, and political organizations.

P=Guatemalan Human Rights Commission (GHRC): Cases occurring in 1983 and earlier as reported in: 1) "Report on the Human Rights Situation in Guatemala," July 1983; 2) "Report: Special Mission to Guatemala to Investigate on Human Rights and Specifically About Involuntary and Forced Disappearances," October 1983; 3) "Information Bulletin", December 29, 1983.

Q="Guatemalan Committee For Justice And Peace", ("an ecumenical christian organization") : "Forced or Involuntary Disappearances in Guatemala", June 1984, prepared with "the collaboration of the World Council Of Churches."

R = American Embassy, Guatemala: Monthly human rights airgrams prepared by the Political Section: 1977-1980.

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S = "ENFOPRENSA" News Agency: "Information On Guatemala," Mexico, D.F. and Washington, DC.: weekly bulletins (June 1984 through December 31, 1985) by ENFOPRENSA USA."

T = Guatemalan Human Rights Commission (GHERC): Cases of August 1985 through December 1985.

V = OXFAM: Cases listed in "Witnesses to Political Violence in Guatemala: The Suppression Of A Rural Development Movement," by Shelton Davis and Julie Hodson, OXFAM America, 1982.

W = America's Watch: "Guatemala: A Nation Of Prisoners," an Americas Watch report, January 1984.

X = IAHRC of the OAS: 1985 Habeas Corpus list: (1985 version of "H")

#### B. METHODOLOGY

A. Data Included: This list is a compilation of disappearances, kidnappings, abductions and accounts of missing persons reported to have occurred in Guatemala from January 1978 through December 1985. All cases cited in available sources are included. We are unaware of other data banks or published information sources. Some cases may be fakes, but by and large the accounts are probably real, even those reported by the GHERC. In the vast majority of the cases in this study, the victims are still missing, or at least no reports of their whereabouts have come to light.

B. Definition of Disappeared: As used in this report, the term desparecido indicates the status of the person who is arrested by security forces or by unidentified agents clearly acting under color and in exercise of governmental authority, in circumstances where the victim is not accounted for. In some cases disappearance is temporary: in many it is permanent and implies that the victim is dead."

In some cases of murder or robbery the victim is held only a short time and is almost immediately killed or released, so that the abduction is only incidental to, or part of, another act. The media often reports such cases as kidnappings. Although some of these cases enter the Guatemalan abduction

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literature, and a few are included in this study, it is not our intention to count cases where an abduction is only incidental to another intended act. Neither does this study include collective displacements of populations by either GOG security forces or by guerrilla groups. For example, the Rand list notes that "...guerrillas forced an exodus of over 500 peasants to Mexico in early May (1981)." This sort of "abduction" report is excluded from the study.

Agencies included in this report have often shown little agreement as to what comprises a kidnapping, an abduction, a disappearance or a missing person case. Some restrict their reporting to cases which appear to have a political connection. Some do not distinguish between continued disappearance and a disappearance or abduction followed by subsequent knowledge of the whereabouts of the victim, while others limit their definition of a "disappearance" to cases where the whereabouts of a victim is not known at the time of publication of their reports. Cases called kidnappings by some reporting sources are subsequently proved to have been misreported. However, there is often little followup or clarification of reports in the Guatemalan news media and, although some individuals reported as missing have subsequently shown up, or knowledge of their fate has come to light, these facts are often not acknowledged publically.

C. Data Arrangement: Case data (Appendix B) is presented by victim's name and date of alleged occurrence. Names are listed first by patronym, matronym, then by christian name, second first name (middle name), and date of disappearance. A code letter for reporting source(s) follows along with a final code letter to indicate the fate of the missing person when known: "U"=unknown (the absence of a final "fate" code letter also indicates that fate is unknown), "A"=alive, and "D"=dead. Cases are alphabetized by patronymic name. (A separate chronological listing has also been made.) A case description in a source document can be located by looking at the publication cited in the letter code.

Dates are arranged by year/month/day. For example, "810304" would refer to March 4, 1981. Occasionally a case description is not reported in a source document during the month that it occurred, but rather in another issue of the publication. In this instance the letter denoting a source is followed by numbers which indicate the particular date in which a case is mentioned in the source file. The first letter

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indicates the year, the following letters indicate month. For example, "E410" following an entry indicates that information about a case is found in the October 1984 American Embassy files.

Case information entry lines may contain more than one date for an occurrence when accounts from different sources do not agree. A notation is included when data indicate that a case may be the same as one mentioned elsewhere, although name or other description vary. Cases in which accounts did not name victims include other descriptive information where this was available.

C. LIMITATIONS OF THE DATA:

Incomplete Data Collection: Few organizations compiled information on incidents before 1980 and many sources used in this study offered only sporadic or incomplete reports. Accounts by reporting sources are often not in agreement with known case facts. Guatemala news gathering and reporting, on which many accounts rely, is not always sophisticated or accurate. Other accounts suffer from a loss of accuracy in translation or retelling, and a heavy factor of hearsay, so that data accuracy is found to be significantly limited.

Changing Collection Efforts: Our figures (Appendix B) show a steady increase in the number of individuals reported as victims through 1984, (with a sharp rise to 1644 in 1984 from 819 in 1983) followed in 1985 by a sharp drop to 738. The 1984 increase may be more apparent than real, i.e., more began to report incidents with increased vigor. The higher figures in later years may thus be a more accurate reflection of the true number of cases than are earlier figures, when less agencies reported. For example, 1978 and 1979 figures are almost exclusively from U.S. Embassy and Amnesty International reports. Also, later Embassy political section figures are more complete, with relatively fewer cases in which the victim goes unnamed in the report and a more liberal policy of inclusion of cases for "informational purposes," even where an incident did not appear to have political overtones. Therefore, the steady increase in totals may reflect a true increase in incidents and/or only an increase in reporting accuracy.

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Implications of Single Source Reporting: No source was close to reporting all cases and the fact that many cases have only one source is a clue that many incidents go unreported. In all, 74% of cases in which a victim was reported by name were from a single source with no corroborating accounts, and almost 83% of all reports were from a single source. Sometimes it is unclear why only one source recorded a case. For example, Amnesty International notes that some of its reports come from newspapers, e.g., its accounts of the disappearance of an Olga Vasquez and an A.E. Ramirez Bautista, yet these cases were not reported by other sources, including those which use newspaper accounts. Americas Watch indicated it took its accounts from the Guatemalan newspapers, yet many were not reported by the British or ourselves.

Data on Sex of Victims: In most cases the sex of the victim was reasonably clear from the first name; 88% of these victims were male. In other instances the sex of a victim is not clear, e.g., the names Maria Rene Quezada and Mario Rene Quezada may both refer to a single victim.

Of the cases in which the sex was not clearly established by name or description (25% of the total incidents), most victims appear to have been males. The percentage of female victims has increased over the period of the study, from slightly over an 11 percent average for 1981 through 1984, to over 17 percent in 1985. This may indicate that as the number of cases dropped, fewer of the remaining incidents had a political motive, and more were "common crimes" in which females were victims.

Double Reporting: At times it is not clear if a report refers to two incidents or to two accounts of the same event. For example, Embassy reporting includes two cases which report the abduction of a prisoner at Cuyotenango, Guatemala. One report speaks of an incident on December 16, 1981 and another describes one on December 23, 1981. These indeed may have been multiple incidents and evidence of acts of violence concentrated in a particular region of the country. However, the Embassy was the sole source of these reports, and in such single-source accounts, where there is no corroborating information from other agencies, it is difficult to know if the cases represent double reporting, or two episodes. Other examples include three reports of abduction of

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"private citizens" in Guatemala City on February 18, 1982 and the abduction of two hospital patients in Huehuetenango--one report on February 27, 1982 and the other on March 1, 1982 (both reported exclusively by the embassy). Two cases, each of two merchants, in Malacatan, one incident on March 26, 1985, the other a day later, were reported exclusively by the British Interest Section.

Other cases vary in date, as per Rand's description of the abduction of the brother of the Minister of the Interior on February 3, 1981, a case which the U.S. Embassy assigns to March 3, 1981. Amnesty International has reported the disappearance of a Gaspar Culan Yataz twice, with different dates. Other victims are twice reported by a single agency, such as Fredy Valdez De Leon, by the GHRC. Amnesty International reported the disappearance of "6 USAC students in the last two weeks of May (1984)," but also reported some of these six as individual cases, e.g., Irma M. Hichos R., in separate accounts. The statistics do include the case of Beatriz Barrios Marroquin, who appears to have actually been abducted twice, once in November 1985, and again in December 1985. She was killed following the second abduction.

Lack of Identifying Data in Some Cases: In some cases no date of occurrence accompanied an account. Cases without date, such as the the 369 habeas corpus entries from the IAERC, offer special difficulty. For example, are Santos Lopez and Santos Lopez Rodas, both listed by "M", and no one else, the same case?

Other cases suffer from account variations or reporting inaccuracies in the description of a victim or in the spelling or order of the victim's name. We have attempted to eliminate duplicates to the extent possible.

Name Discrepancies: Examples are those of "Faustino Yoc" and "Faustino Yoj," reported only by the GHRC (and probably a single case spelled in two variations). Name order is often not clear and cases sometimes appear to be reported by christian name, rather than by surname, by matronym rather than by patronym, or by both in separate accounts. This can result in double reporting of a single case, such as that of Jorge Alberto Giron who was also called Jorge Giron Alberto. A Jose Lopez Bran was called alternatively, Jose Lopez Gran and Jose Lopez Balan, and he was reported abducted on two dates, some three years apart. In other cases names are unclear.

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"Gustavo Aldolfo Fuentes Castanon (reported by this name in six sources) was called "Gustavo Aldolfo Castaneda Funes" by Amnesty International. The surnames of "Cornell" and "Coronel" appear to refer to a single person, as do the accounts of F.B. Chay G. and F.B. Chig G.

Incomplete Information: Often a victim's name is not given in reports, but some other descriptive information is available, such as christian name; occupation, such as "merchant from Escuintla," or the location of the incident. A close comparison of these cases via field research would show that some of these "unknowns" correspond to persons named in other accounts and the total number of incidents in this study could probably be reduced somewhat. Although our results doubtlessly include some instances of duplicate reporting due to name errors, "unknowns," and other deficiencies in available data, the figures reported are probably far lower than the true number of cases which occurred during the period.

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APPENDIX H

How Accurate is the Reporting on Disappearances?

The American Embassy has claimed, and U.S. policy has been prefaced on, the assumption that "things are getting better in Guatemala." The results of this study show that Embassy analysis of trends has been essentially accurate. It tracked 30% of the incidents and about 42% of all individuals eventually reported missing or kidnapped. No other group catalogued as many cases as Embassy Guatemala, or as correctly monitored basic trends as revealed in this study (including the 1984 increase in disappearances). This study supports the Embassy's contention that the situation improved in 1985 and continues to get better.

Evaluation of Primary Reporting Sources: There are only three important external, and one important internal, primary sources for data on human rights abuses in Guatemala: The American Embassy, Guatemala, the Mutual Support Group (GAM), the Guatemalan Human Rights Commission, and Amnesty International. The other sources cited in this report appear either to have received most of their information from these primary groups or to have relied strictly on one source, such as the Guatemalan newspapers. Their reports are sporadic and limited to a few cases that generally lack details such as names, locations and dates of incidents.

The Importance of Press Accounts: Guatemalan news media accounts have been the major source of incident reporting for several groups, including the Embassy and the British Interest Section of the Swiss Embassy. However, our study shows that the Guatemalan press has reported only some 54% of known victims since December 1980; that no one reporting agency has recorded all press accounts; and that most press reports were not recorded by more than one agency. The fact that different groups which rely on the press for disappearance accounts more often than not did not report the same cases indicates either different criteria for case inclusion or, more likely, failure to report many cases. For example, the Americas Watch cases cited in this study were based on Guatemalan press accounts in 1983. Although these contributions caused the total number of incident reports attributable to press sources to have climbed to 68 percent in 1983 from the 54% average, many of the offerings were not reported by the Embassy nor by the British.

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American Embassy, Guatemala: The Embassy's Political Section has produced a monthly report on political violence and human rights in Guatemala since late 1977. Case data from these reports and other monthly data compiled by the Embassy's Regional Security Office (RSO) monthly reports has been used in this study. The RSO reports, based on newspaper materials provided each month by the Political Section, include cases which do not appear at first blush to have a political motive. The political section's monthly human rights reports only recorded cases which appeared to be politically-inspired human rights violations. Since 1983 the Political Section has begun to keep clippings on cases without apparent political connection, for informational purposes. This has led to an increase in the overall reporting of abductions by the mission.

Embassy reports have been developed with information "taken from official GOG bulletins, independent news reports and guerrilla communiques as reported by FBIS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service)," but, as noted above, the main source been has the Guatemalan press. At times the Embassy has been privy to other sources of information on kidnappings, but such data have not been factored into the monthly unclassified human rights reports since that might compromise reporting sources. Through time Embassy reports have become more specific and accurate, with fewer victims described as "unknown."

The Embassy has not usually listed as an abduction a case in which a victim was abducted and soon killed. These incidents have been listed as political murders (other organizations also follow this practice, e.g., the GHRC). For purposes of this study, such cases have been included, if more than a few hours appear to have passed from the abduction to the killing.

No reporting agency has shown a complete picture of the phenomenon of disappearances in Guatemala. However, the U.S. Embassy has the most consistent and accurate reporting record, citing the largest number of cases of any source (1346 incidents and 2693 victims). The Embassy registered about 42% of the kidnappings listed in this study versus 17% and 18% for the next two major sources, Amnesty International and the GHRC.

Since 1982, the Embassy has been registering a progressively smaller share of the disappearance cases: from 61% in 1983, to 37% the next year, and 31% in 1985. This reflects the entry of other groups into the reporting field. It also suggests that those with information about cases are not informing the local press, but rather foreign advocacy

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groups -- including some linked to the guerrillas such as the GHRC -- who through international publicity attempt to secure the freedom of the victims or to focus outside pressure to stop the practice of kidnapping.

Except for the 1982-1983 period, the Embassy's annual human rights reports to Congress have correctly reflected the overall kidnapping trends shown by our study (in that period, we reported a decline in kidnappings, while the data suggest there was an increase). For example, the Embassy has averred that reports of abduction and disappearance dropped from 1984 to 1985. Other primary reporting agencies also reported sharp declines in abductions that year. For that year we reported a 50% drop in disappearances; all agencies together reported a 55% decrease from 1985 to 1984 (738 cases to 1644). Even 1985 reporting from the GHRC, the harshest critic of Guatemala, corroborated Embassy trend analysis. In 1985 this Mexico-based insurgent front tallied only 47% of the number of cases it had reported in 1984.

The GAM: "The Mutual Support Group": GAM represents relatives of some 700 missing persons who believe their relatives were "forcibly detained and disappeared." GAM lists contain the names of 613 individuals who allegedly disappeared through May 1985, or about 10 percent of total individuals recorded in this study.

Most GAM relatives were abducted before its founding in May/June 1984. From that date to the publication in June 1985 of its list of disappeared relatives, the GAM registered only 70 additional cases of "disappeared" relatives -- equivalent to only 6% of the 1125 total victims tallied in our study during this period and only 11% of the total names in GAM case files. In addition to confirming a drop in overall disappearance cases since its founding, this relatively low GAM figure may mean that fewer relatives of the disappeared joined the group, perhaps out of fear -- two GAM members were killed in this period -- or because of the GAM'S increasing political radicalization.

Although GAM's leaders say it is comprised of relatives of those who were illegally detained and never reappeared, a GAM spokesperson told an Embassy officer that the group had accepted as members some persons whose relatives did not seem to fit the criterion. She explained that GAM had reluctantly accepted families of crew members of a cargo ship, the "DIANA D" which disappeared on the high seas in 1984 with no evidence of abduction, or indication that the ship's disappearance fit GAM's definition of "detained /disappeared." GAM claims not to know the whereabouts of their relatives. However, other

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organizations have reported the deaths of some GAM relatives. For example, Diego Calel Lares, listed as missing by GAM, was reported by the Guatemalan Human Rights Commission as having been killed.

GAM's list of disappeared includes double reporting of some cases, with spelling and date variations, so that the number of disappeared represented by the 724 names appears to be about 613 individuals. For example, GAM listed a victim of January 5, 1982 as both "Jose Ines Rabinal Chon" or "Cham" and as "Jose Reginal Chan".

Guatemalan Human Rights Commission: GHRC monthly reports were the source of the second highest number of cases in this study, 1027 incidents, some with multiple victims. The GHRC generally blames government security forces -- never the insurgents or common criminals -- for the disappearances of those it lists in its monthly compendium of human rights violations. Like the Embassy, it distinguishes disappeared, i.e., whereabouts unknown at time of report, from cases where an abduction preceded the known death or the reappearance of a victim, reporting both separately. We have included all GHRC cases that meet our definition of kidnapping. GHRC reports treat "forced" movements of people into the "Poles of Development" resettlement projects as abductions. We excluded these cases.

Only 27 per cent of GHRC-reported cases, some with multiple victims, appeared in the Guatemalan press. The organization apparently deigned to report accounts locally, choosing instead to publicize cases abroad to increase international pressure on the government to stop kidnapping insurgents. Although the GHRC does not reveal its sources, as far as we know, within Guatemala there are no overt information collecting or reporting networks, nor any international human rights monitoring groups. Thus, it seems that the GHRC obtains its case information from insurgent groups or from individual priests with information on abuses in their jurisdiction.

Amnesty International: Amnesty International receives data on abductions from reporting sources in various countries. It also uses data from newspapers, but most Guatemalan cases reported by Amnesty have not appeared in the local press. It is probable that other groups channel accounts to Amnesty as well, and four organizations used in our study may be important Amnesty sources: In cases reported in 1983 through 1985, over 33% of Amnesty-reported incidents were also common to the GHRC; an additional 9% of the cases reported by Amnesty were also

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reported by the GAM; and another 7% by either Lord Avebury's British Parliamentary Group or the Inter-American Human Rights Commission. In all, about 50 percent of the missing persons cases reported by Amnesty in the three-year period (1983-1985) were common to at least one other of these four organizations, while most cases (75%) in that time period were single source. The unusually high degree of commonality of cases reported by these groups, and the fact that many of their accounts were not publicly reported in the press, suggest that they share accounts.

Amnesty and the Guatemalan Human Rights Commission treat disappearances similarly -- both define the problem as exclusively the fault of the security forces. An Amnesty publication states that "a 'disappearance' occurs whenever there are reasonable grounds to believe that a person (the victim) has been taken into custody by the authorities or their agents..." This definition fails to take into account kidnappings by leftist extremist and insurgent groups. Neither Amnesty, the GHRC or the GAM have ever cited a case of a kidnapping perpetrated by other than the security forces, even though there is evidence that the insurgents have resorted to kidnapping in the past.

Data in Amnesty's "Urgent Action" reports is not always accurate, but this is acknowledged. The case of Jorge Mario Alberto Giron Sandoval, reported kidnapped on May 3, 1985, is an example of this inaccuracy. In a report of July 12, 1985, Amnesty claimed that Giron had been released by his abductors on May 27, 1985. However, Giron's mother subsequently told an Embassy political officer that despite the Amnesty report, the whereabouts of her son were still unknown.

Evaluation of Secondary Sources: Asylum applications appear to be a good source of primary information on kidnappings not found otherwise. Many kidnapping cases only come to light when applicants for political asylum in the U.S. mention the names of missing persons in their applications. Only a token number of these cases were entered into this report, but those checked were found to not have been otherwise reported.

Other organizations cited in this study did not contribute much new information on kidnappings. The U.K. Interest Section reports are a chronology of articles from the Guatemalan press. The WOLA, NISGUA and Americas Watch contributions are also restricted to newspaper accounts. Americas Watch bills its offering as "a listing of violent incidents reported in Guatemala's major press over a recent four month period, evidence of the extraordinary intensity of the violence being reported, and of the manner in which it is reported." In its

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"Guatemala: A Nation Of Prisoners," Americas Watch includes such misplaced incidents as the September 18, 1982 report of the death of Rene Perez Lopez in Cantel, Quezaltenango, after being struck by lightning, and the November 4 "arrest of 38 persons for breaking the law."

OXFAM cases are primarily generalized accounts of unnamed victims. Its publication offers a chronology of political violence based on interviews with North Americans who were in Guatemala, from Guatemalan and foreign newspapers, and "from human rights and religious organizations, and special investigative reports of the U.S. Congress, Amnesty International and Inter-American Commission on Human Rights." OXFAM presented only three cases not recorded elsewhere.

The "B" coalition includes only a few cases not reported elsewhere and seems to depend on other organizations, especially the GAM, for case data. One of its few unique cases, that of a "Francisco Cocon," appears to be a misspelling of a GAM-reported case, "Francisco Pocon." The Guatemalan Committee For Peace And Justice presented few specific cases and only five not reported elsewhere. The Inter-American Human Rights Commission (IAHRC) says that it has done independent research, including a field study in Guatemala in May 1985. However, of an IAHRC list of thirty names of disappeared persons for whom writs of habeas corpus were presented to the Guatemalan Supreme Court in 1985, all (one with a change of Christian name) were also cited by the GHRC. It appears that the GHRC is an important information source for the IAHRC.

The British Parliamentary group of Lord Averbury warrants special mention. The group states that its report was compiled following the mission to Guatemala by two group leaders and was supplemented by testimonies taken by its researchers. However, many of the names offered by the group, when compared to other sources, appear to be transposed, or otherwise modified, versions of names listed by others. We see no evidence it did significant in-country research. Instead, it seems to have often rereported, in a garbled manner, names reported by other organizations. For example, a case reported by Lord Averbury as Julio Velasquez appears to be the same as that reported in three other sources as Julio Vasquez de Leon. Yolanda Cardosa appears to be described by four other sources as Yolanda Rodriguez; Alejandro Fernandez matches Alejandro Hernandez; Victor Manuel Ortega Sanchez appears to be the same individual as the GHRC's Victor Manuel Ortega Perez, and "Amparo Alvarado" coincides with Amparo Gonzalez. Santiago Luis Aguilar appears to be the victim whom other sources call Santiago Lopez Aguilar; Marcelino Escobar Chavac is probably "A" and "E"'s Raul Escobar Chavac; the IAHRC's Lazaro Escalon

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becomes "Lazari Ejcalcon," and the accounts of cases reported elsewhere by the surname "Cheven" become "Citeven" following the special Avebury treatment. The case of Hugo Rolando Moran Rodriguez appears to be the same as that of Hugo Rolando Moran Ramirez, despite different years for the kidnapping and the different matronymic name. Lord Avebury's group did report the names and cases of some alleged victims not published elsewhere, e.g., ten campesinos abducted at Finca Monte Cristo.

Our conclusion is that the GHRC and the GAM are feeders for the IAERC, for Amnesty International, and for ENFOPRENSA as well. The "B" coalition also relied heavily on GAM for its data. Generally the GAM, the "B" group, the GHRC and the British Parliamentarian Group report the same cases. The "Guatemalan Committee For Peace And Justice" often appears linked with the above groups and with Amnesty International. OXFAM accounts also often appear with those of GAM and Amnesty International.

The way cases are reported often reflects the reporting agencies' political biases. Of the June 1981 disappearance of Jesuit priest Luis Pellecer, Amnesty International said (1982 report) "Pellecer was violently abducted ...in the capital on June 9. Father Pellecer became one of the few Guatemalans to be located after having 'disappeared.' Father Pellecer 'confessed' to having arranged his own 'self-kidnapping' in order to break away from involvement from the guerrillas. His statement accused the Roman Catholic church of actively encouraging communist subversion throughout Central America... Friends and associates who viewed the televised statement were convinced that Father Pellecer appeared to be under severe psychological stress and that his statement was totally out of character." Pax Christi (a "B" reporting source) said Pellecer was "kidnapped in the centre of Guatemala City. First of all, many kidnappings like this one happen in broad daylight. They are common knowledge....According to trustworthy witnesses, six armed men drew near and ordered him to get out (of his car). They then struck him on the head and carried him away unconscious." In the Rand account of the incident "....Pellecer..believed kidnapped, surfaced on September 30 and was presented by the government for a press conference. He claimed to have been a member of the EGP for 17 months and to have arranged his own 'kidnapping' to 'escape from his mistake.' Pellecer denounced the Jesuits and other clergy for spreading revolution through 'liberation theology' and Marxist-Leninism. Pellecer asserted that Church-sponsored mass organizations served as a base of support for the guerrillas."

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