

# BURNING FOR DEMOCRACY

Chris Hedges

SAN SALVADOR -- The Salvadoran Air Force is using incendiary bombs against the civilian population in the zone around the Guazapa Volcano, according to displaced people who recently fled the area, troops who operate in the zone, and a European doctor who examined two civilians wounded during an attack.

Their descriptions appear to indicate that both napalm (jellied gasoline) and white phosphorous are being used.

Salvadoran and U.S. officials deny that there are incendiary bombs in the Air Force's arsenal.

"We do not have incendiary bombs," says Col. Arispides Cienfuegos, the spokesman for the Salvadoran Joint Chiefs of Staff. "I have never seen these types of bombs since my arrival in this post in June, 1983. Before that I don't know."

"We do not supply incendiary bombs to the Salvadorans," says U.S. Embassy spokesman Greg Lagana. "The only incendiary device is the 2.75 millimeter white phosphorous rocket used to mark an area for bombing," he says, probably referring to a 2.75 inch device. "This rocket can cause a fire in a dry area."

Chief of operations for the Salvadoran Air Force, a Capt. Barrera, refuses to comment on the charges, saying all statements from the armed forces must come from the Joint Chiefs of Staff press office. "If you've talked to the US Embassy," Barrera asks, "why do you need a statement from us? Who do you believe more, the subversives or the embassy?"

Those who contend they have survived incendiary attacks in recent weeks say the bombs are dropped on them by helicopters, light aircraft and A-37 Dragonfly Jet-Fighter Bombers. The size of these incendiary bombs apparently vary from rockets to much larger containers.

Civilians from the zone refer to the incendiary material as the "flaming liquid." They distinguish between two different types -- one that appears to resemble napalm and the other white phosphorous.

"The worst bomb is the one that shoots out fire and cannot be put out," says one man who recently fled from the town of Guadalupe, which residents say was destroyed by incendiary bombs two weeks ago. "This bomb has a strong bitter smell and when pieces of the flaming liquid land on you they eat deep into your flesh and travel along your body."

Residents contend that if water is put on a wound caused by this type of bomb the burning will continue. They say they must shield nose and mouth with a damp cloth to lessen the effect of toxic fumes.

"When burning white

phosphorous enters the body it keeps on burning," Dr. Matthew Meselson, a Harvard University biochemistry professor who is an expert on chemical weapons, said in a telephone interview. "It will burn under water and actually burn inside the body. It is a horrible anti-personnel weapon. The white phosphorous will also emit acid sulfuric fumes and the effects of the fumes could be reduced by the use of a wet handkerchief over the mouth."

Residents from the zone say the second type of incendiary bomb creates clouds of black smoke which make it hard to breathe. They say it shoots out larger pieces of flaming liquid, and leaves an oily film over the water and along the ground.

"From the description," says Meselson, "it sounds like napalm. Napalm burns at a much higher temperature than white phosphorous so it consumes more oxygen. The oily film could be from napalm residues on the ground."

"The United States and other countries," says Meselson, "have stockpiled large quantities of napalm, white phosphorous and related flame weapons since the Vietnam war."

Dr. Meselson says such weapons could easily be devised on the battlefield and he and others note napalm can be used in conjunction with "iron" bombs -- the term used to describe bombs simply dropped from the air -- which are not themselves incendiary.

The Salvadoran Air Force, according to military officials here, is equipped with 250, 500 and 750 lb. explosive "iron" bombs. The Air Force recently acquired anti-personnel "iron" bombs which explode about a yard before hitting the ground, according to these sources. All of these bombs are fragmentation bombs, which send shards of metal flying when they explode.

"Usually we drop incendiary bombs before we begin operations in the area around the volcano," said a Salvadoran soldier from the Fifth Infantry Brigade, who was standing with several of his companions at the rear guard of a

fire fight near Tenancingo. "By the time we enter the area, the land has been burned over, and the subversives pretty well toasted."

Soldiers in the Atlacatl Immediate Reaction (IR) Battalion also contend that incendiary weapons are used before large-scale operations in the zone. Soldiers from both the Atlacatl and Fifth Brigade say they have seen small villages in the area burned to the ground and large tracks of land charred by incendiary bombs.

"We have holes dug in the ground outside our villages to hide in when the planes come," says another villager displaced from Guadalupe. "And we keep the children in the holes or near them all day."

"At first the Air Force dropped bombs which knocked down trees and houses, killed people and made a three meter (over nine foot) crater. Then they began to drop bombs that exploded before hitting the ground, and others that made craters eight meters (over 26 feet) deep to kill us as we hid in our shelters. Now they use the worst bomb of all -- the flaming liquid."

"I was outside my house when the bomb fell," says one woman. "I could not see anything because of the black smoke and could not get air. Everything was on fire. My two children burned to death."

This woman contends she was wounded by this bomb. She has several large areas of scar tissue on her body.

"Napalm," Dr. John Constable, a burn expert at Massachusetts General Hospital who treated incendiary weapons victims in Vietnam, said in a telephone interview, "will burn in large patches along the surface of the skin where it makes contact. The burns are different than those of white phosphorous which are more profound wounds that often resemble the pattern left by a shot gun wound."

Another woman now living in a displaced person's camp in the capital is marked with keloid scar tissue, which resembles several

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## MORE ARMS, MORE PEACE? Increasing US Weapons for Central America

Fiscal Year	Military Agreements	Military Deliveries
1979	\$ 7.3 million	\$14.5 million
1980	\$ 39.7 million	\$36.3 million
1981	\$ 44.6 million	\$18.1 million
1982	\$111.3 million	\$59.5 million
1983	\$177.4 million	\$70.1 million

Note: Figures are current dollars and include cash sales, loans and grants.

Source: DoD.

Chart prepared by the Center for Defense Information.

Oakland A's third baseman Carney Lansford says this year's crop of baseball bats is the worst he's ever seen. And first baseman Bruce Bochte thinks he knows why: the wood comes from forests in the northeast which have been hard hit by industrial pollution. An official of the firm that makes Louisville Sluggers, however, blames the players for insisting on lighter bats and says he doubts a 75-year-old tree would be affected by acid rain.

Some 21,000 TV sets were turned on by remote control when a computer malfunctioned at a cable company in the St. Louis suburbs and remained on until someone at home turned them off.

The Southern Libertarian Messenger reports that Gary Allerheiligen of Independence, Kan., ordered forms from the IRS and got instead ten pounds of surplus cheese. Other choice bits from SLM include a story that someone put a piranha in the fountain at Iowa State University and it bit two employees. Also, in Dacca, the Continental Hotel warns that "Ladies in shorts and mini-skirts will be stoned."

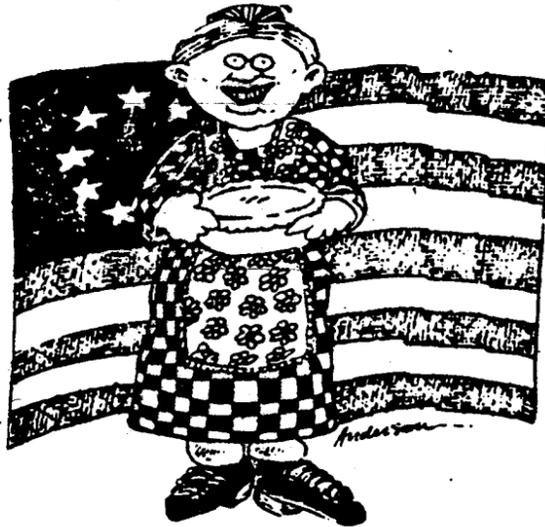
For the first time in fifteen years, young girls are crowding the record stores. A national survey found that the number of female record buyers has doubled in the last two years and they're twice as likely to be under the age of 15. That could have a big effect on who makes the top 40. Young girls are turned off by heavy metal and prefer pop-oriented bands like Menudo or Duran Duran.

Meditation is supposed to be good for everything from high blood pressure and alcoholism to asthma. But a University of Kansas researcher says he's come up with an improvement: the Barca-Lounger. Psychologist David Holmes says studies have shown that sitting in a reclining chair has the same effect on heart rate, blood pressure and muscle tension. In fact, he says, there is no evidence that meditation reduces stress any better than simply relaxing.

The Indians who sold Manhattan to Dutch colonists for \$24 in 1626 may not have made such a bad deal. Real estate consultant Edgar Madsen says that \$24, invested in a savings account at 6% compound interest, would now be worth \$27.6 billion, or \$4 billion more than the assessed value of all the taxable real estate on Manhattan.

No more big theme parks will be built in the US, say industry executives. The market has apparently reached the saturation point.

Population experts studying results from the 1980 census have discovered a small but interesting trend: old



## Apple Pie

people are beginning to migrate from the Sun Belt back to the Northeast. An estimated 9000 retired people moved from Florida to New York, twice as many as in the previous decade.

An official of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration has told congressional investigators he can't supply some crucial documents because his dog threw up on them. Leonard Vance, head of OSHA health

standards, had been asked to turn over his appointment calendar in connection with charges he blocked efforts to restrict use of a cancer-causing chemical. Vance told the investigators his records were in the back of his pickup truck when his dog got sick. He says he had no choice but to drive to a dump and get rid of them.

Lonely Long Islanders now can reach out and touch someone, thanks to a new service called "Phone-a-Friend." It's an experimental project by Nynex, the Bell spinoff in the Northeast, and it works like this: there are three phone numbers, for young adults, the middle aged and the elderly. Dial one up and you are patched into a conversation with up to four other people. It's sort of a random party line, and you don't have to talk, you can just listen. The services isn't free, however. It costs up to 24 cents for the first minute. Nynex plans to expand coverage if the idea catches on. A similar service in Brazil now handles between 12 and 15 million calls a month.

A plan to ban outhouses in Wisconsin has gone down the drain because of  
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savers than ever before. Most new furnaces, water heaters, ranges and dryers are equipped with special energy-conserving features designed to use less gas and save you more money.

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