

Robbery believed motive in shooting of U.S. sister

By Ines Pinto Alicea
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — A 72-year-old American nun who has been called an "angel of mercy" for her work with orphans was shot in the head and seriously wounded in an apparent attempted robbery in El Salvador, an official from her order said.

Sister Stanislaus "Stan" Mackey, a member of the Houston-based Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, was wounded shortly before 8 p.m. June 21 as she traveled in a car with two nuns from a San Salvador bank to Zaragoza, 10 miles to the south, said Sister Corona Farrell, assistant general superior of the order.

Sister Farrell told Catholic News Service that a yellow truck with five men pulled up next to the nuns' car, and one of the men shot through the car windows.

"The bullet went behind the driver and hit Sister Stan in the left eye. The bullet then lodged in her neck," she said.

Sister Mackey's traveling companions, Sisters Ann Mary Brangan and Juana Margarita, also of the same order, said it appeared the men just wanted to scare them with the single gunshot, according to Sister Farrell.

Once the assailant realized someone had been hurt, he had a look of "amazement," and the car sped away, the nuns reported. The suspects have not been captured.

"They just feel it was an attempted robbery," Sister Farrell said. "They had just cashed some checks."

Sister Mackey, born in Ireland but a naturalized U.S. citizen, has been a nurse and supervisor at the orphanage, Oscar Arnulfo Romero Community in Zaragoza, since it opened in 1983. The community center is named after the Salvadoran archbishop murdered in March 1980.

Sister Farrell said Sister Mackey was in critical condition at the Polytechnical Clinic in San Salvador, where she underwent surgery June 21.

She has lost sight in her left eye and the bullet remained lodged in her neck, but doctors there hoped her condition would stabilize so she could be moved to a hospital in Houston at her order's request, Sister

Farrell said.

"She bled profusely," Sister Farrell said. "They are doing tests to see if there was more damage. Everybody is praying for her."

Sister Mackey, whom American newsman Dan Rather called an "angel of mercy" in a television news piece he did several years ago on her work with the orphanage, had two weeks earlier returned to the Central American country from a visit to her Houston order. She had been in the United States to celebrate her 50th anniversary as a nun. She planned to go to Ireland July 7.

"She's the most delightful person," Sister Farrell said.

Sister Farrell said she believes the incident was not politically motivated. Some Salvadoran armed forces officers consider nuns, priests and other church people who work in poor communities sympathizers of leftist guerrillas battling the U.S.-backed government.

"Sister Stan has tried to make it known that she's there for the children only, and I think she has succeeded," Sister Farrell said.

In December 1980, three U.S. nuns and an American lay missionary were killed by National Guard troops in El Salvador. The case led to a temporary suspension of U.S. aid to El Salvador.

Five National Guardsmen were convicted of the murders in 1984 and sentenced to 30 years in prison. The men said the nuns were "subversives."

The attack on Sister Mackey comes on the heels of a major debate in the U.S. Congress on imposing conditions on military aid to El Salvador based on the human-rights record of its new president, Alfredo Cristiani. Members of Cristiani's National Republican Alliance have been linked to right-wing death squads.

The debate, slated to start June 22, was to focus on an attempt to amend a bill authorizing \$177 million in military aid to El Salvador in four installments over the next two years.

Congressional Democrats were asking that the second installment be released only after a vote of approval from Congress.



Sister Stanislaus "Stan" Mackey, called an "angel of mercy" for her work with orphans, stands with a group of children in this 1986 file photo.

Court rejects ban on dial-a-porn

By Jerry Filteau
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court ruled June 23 that Congress cannot ban adult access to "dial-a-porn" that is "indecent" but not "obscene."

The high court declined to define where indecency crosses over into obscenity in the billion-dollar industry of sexually explicit telephone messages.

The court's ruling overturned a 1988 law, passed by overwhelming margins in both houses of Congress, which in effect treated the pay-per-call phone messages on the same level as broadcasting, in which

indecent programming is forbidden in order to protect children.

Existing technology that screens calls, scrambles messages and requires advance identification or credit-card payment appears to be sufficient to protect children from access to "dial-a-porn" operations, the court said.

The court ruling came in the case of *Sable Communications of California vs. Federal Communications Commission*. Sable, a Los Angeles-based company offering nationwide pay-per-call access to sexually explicit messages, had challenged the 1988 law in court shortly after it was passed.

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