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ACTION ARA-15

RELEASE IN FULL

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 SS-15 SP-02 HA-05 INR-10 IO-14
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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7113
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMMBASSY SAN JOSE 6157
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
AMEMBASSY MADRID
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PN
DIA WASHDC

SECRET SAN SALVADOR 1355

E.O. 12065: GDS 2/22/86 (DION, MARK) OR-M
TAGS: PGOV PINT PINS ES
SUBJ: VIEWS OF NATIONAL GUARD AND NATIONAL POLICE COMMANDERS

REF: SAN SALVADOR 1336 (NOTAL)

1. (S-ENTIRE TEXT)

2. DCM ATTENDED LUNCH FEB 22, WHICH WAS ARRANGED BY
PROMINENT LOCAL LAWYER DR CARLOS ADALBERTO FONSECA, WITH
COMMANDER OF NATIONAL GUARD COL CARLOS EUGENIO VIDES
CASANOVA AND NATIONAL POLICE COMMANDER COL CARLOS
REYNALDO LOPEZ NUILA. THEIR CLEAR PURPOSE WAS TO PROBE
DEPTH OF US COMMITMENT TO MILITARY/CIVILIAN ALLIANCE AND
REACTION TO OUSTER OF CIVILIAN MEMBERS OF JRG.

3. IT BECAME CLEAR IN COURSE OF THE DISCUSSION THAT
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COMPLAINTS ABOUT INEFFICIENCY, LACK OF COHESIVENESS
AND BLIND PARTISANSHIP OF PDC, WHICH WE HAVE HEARD
FROM ALL MILITARY ELEMENTS, PALED IN IMPORTANCE
BESIDE INTENSE CONCERN WITH SCOPE AND RAMIFICATIONS
OF AGRARIAN REFORM.

4. THE TWO COLONELS ARGUED OVER AND OVER THAT REFORM
WAS ESSENTIAL TO HEAD OFF LEFTIST TAKEOVER BUT THAT
AGRARIAN REFORM THAT PDC IS PUSHING IS TOO SWEEPING
AND WILL ALTER SALVADORAN SOCIETY TOO MUCH. THEY

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Leonard Kusnitz, Senior Reviewer

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ASKED REPEATEDLY IF REFORM PROPOSAL SHOULD NOT BE LIMITED TO PROPERTIES OVER 1,000 HECTARES IN ORDER TO PRESERVE SUPPORT FOR JUNTA AMONG "SMALL" PROPERTY OWNERS. AT ONE POINT COL VIDES SAID THAT ROUGH CALCULATION WAS THAT APPLYING REFORM TO PROPERTIES OVER 1,000 HECTARES WOULD INVOLVE ABOUT 5,000 PEOPLE, PROPERTIES OVER 500 HECTARES ABOUT 20,000 PEOPLE AND PROPERTIES OVER 200 HECTARES 70,000 PEOPLE. HE HINTED STRONGLY THAT MILITARY COULD NOT AFFORD TO OFFEND 70,000 LANDOWNERS.

5. DCM REITERATED FLAT-OUT US SUPPORT FOR CURRENT JUNTA AND URGED STRONGLY THAT PDC BE RETAINED IN THE JUNTA TO PRESERVE CREDIBILITY OF REFORM PROGRAM. FORMULA FOR AGRARIAN AND OTHER REFORMS WOULD HAVE TO BE WORKED OUT IN DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS AND EXPERTS IN THE SUBJECT COULD BE MADE AVAILABLE BUT DECISIONS HAD TO BE TAKEN BY CIVILIAN/MILITARY LEADERSHIP IN FULL RECOGNITION THAT CREDIBLE AGRARIAN REFORM IS BASIC TO MAINTAINING NON-COMMUNIST SOCIETY HERE. FOREIGN SUPPORT, BOTH ECONOMIC AND MILITARY, IS IMPORTANT TO THE OUTCOME AND COULD BE JEOPARDIZED BY ACTION TO DILUTE REFORM MEASURES OR RESORT TO ALL-OUT
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VIOLENCE. DCM WARNED SPECIFICALLY THAT COUP TO OUST PDC WOULD BE RETROACTIVE STEP THAT COULD COST JUNTA SUPPORT AMONG DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS.

6. THE TWO COLONELS ENDED UP EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR US POSITION BUT INTRODUCED A VARIETY OF FOOTNOTES ABOUT WHAT KIND OF REFORM MEASURES MILITARY WILL BE ABLE TO SWALLOW. THEY DID AGREE, FOR WHAT THIS IS WORTH, THAT JUNTA SHOULD BE PRESERVED INTACT FOR AT LEAST ANOTHER THREE TO FOUR MONTHS TO SEE IF PROGRESS ON REFORM AND RESTORATION OF ORDER COULD BE ACHIEVED BY PRESENT COMPOSITION OF GOVERNMENT.
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