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TO: IMMEDIATE DIRNSA, DEPT OF STATE, DIA, TREASURY DEPT, NPIC,  
SECRET SERVICE, FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, DEPT OF JUSTICE,  
WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM, NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL  
STAFF, [redacted]  
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PA.

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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DSIT : 12 JULY 82  
COUNTRY: EL SALVADOR  
SUBJECT: APPRAISAL OF SITUATION: THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY  
SITUATION IN EL SALVADOR [redacted]

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SUMMARY. THE KEY ELEMENT IN THE SALVADORAN POWER STRUCTURE  
IS THE ARMED FORCES. THE ARMY CONTINUES TO INFLUENCE THE POLITICAL  
PROCESS AND IS COMMITTED TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGRARIAN REFORM,  
ALBEIT PRIMARILY TO MAINTAIN U.S. MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID.  
FORMER LANDOWNERS AND THEIR ALLIES ARE INTENT UPON CIRCUMVENTING

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THE REFORM PROGRAM AND ARE INCREASINGLY RESENTFUL OF THOSE WHO PROMOTE IT, INCLUDING THE U.S. GOVERNMENT. PRESIDENT ALVARO ((MAGANA)) IS EMERGING AS A COMPETENT POLITICIAN AND POSITIVE INFLUENCE. THE MILITARY HAS CONCLUDED A MASSIVE AND COSTLY OPERATION AGAINST A MAJOR INSURGENT STRONGHOLD AND IS NOW PLAGUED BY HIT-AND-RUN ATTACKS IN OTHER AREAS. THE MILITARY SUFFERS FROM WIDE VARIATION IN LEADERSHIP ABILITIES, A POORLY DEFINED NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY, AND COMMAND AND CONTROL BUT IS SLOWLY IMPROVING IN SOME OF THESE AREAS.  
END SUMMARY.

## POLITICAL SITUATION

1. THE SALVADORAN ARMED FORCES HAVE PROVEN TO BE THE KEY ELEMENT IN THE POWER STRUCTURE. FOLLOWING THE 28 MARCH CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, THE HIGH COMMAND INTERVENED IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS TO OVERCOME RIGHT WING OPPOSITION AND ENSURE SUBSTANTIAL PARTICIPATION BY THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PDC). THE MILITARY DID THIS DESPITE THE FACT THAT IT DISTRUSTS THE PDC BECAUSE OF ITS PREVIOUS LEFTIST ASSOCIATIONS. THE MILITARY HAS FORMED A WATCHDOG COMMITTEE OF SENIOR OFFICERS TO MONITOR THE POLITICAL PROCESS AND EXERT ITS CONSIDERABLE

INFLUENCE AS CONSIDERED NECESSARY.

2. AT THE SAME TIME, THE MILITARY IS DETERMINED TO ASSURE CONTINUED U.S. MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID BY CONVINCING THE U.S. CONGRESS THAT LAND REFORM IN PARTICULAR AND THE REFORM PROCESS IN GENERAL IS A PERMANENT PART OF THE SALVADORAN POLITICAL PROCESS. ALTHOUGH THE PERCEIVED RIGHTIST VICTORY IN THE 28 MARCH ELECTIONS INSPIRED A SURGE OF ILLEGAL EVICTIONS, PRESIDENT MAGANA, FULLY BACKED BY THE HIGH COMMAND, REACTED EFFECTIVELY TO RESTORE THE AGRARIAN REFORM PROCESS. THE PRESIDENT AND THE HIGH COMMAND ARE PLAYING A HIGHLY PUBLIC ROLE IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF PROVISIONAL LAND TITLES TO CAMPESINOS, AND ARE DETERMINED THAT SOCIAL AND AGRARIAN REFORMS BE ACTIVELY PURSUED. EVEN SO, BITTER OPPOSITION REMAINS FROM FORMER

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WEALTHY LANDOWNERS AND BUSINESSMEN WHO ARE FULLY COMMITTED TO RESTORING THEIR LOST WEALTH AND POLITICAL STATUS. WHILE THEIR STRATEGY IS NOT PUBLICLY STATED, THEY ARE DEDICATED TO MANIPULATING THE POLITICAL PROCESS TO THIS END.

3. THIS LATTER ELEMENT MAINTAINS AN INTENSE CONTEMPT FOR THE PROPONENTS OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHANGE, AS CURRENTLY CONSTITUTED, INCLUDING U.S. OFFICIALS. THE DEPTH OF THIS RIGHT WING ANIMOSITY SHOULD NOT BE UNDERESTIMATED. IT HAS TO DATE RESULTED IN THE DEATHS OF SEVERAL PDC OFFICIALS AND IS BEHIND A CAMPAIGN OF ILLEGAL EVICTIONS TO DRIVE CAMPESINOS OFF LAND TO WHICH THEY HAVE A LEGAL CLAIM.

4. DESPITE THE ABOVE, THE EXTREME RIGHT IN THE POLITICAL ARENA WOULD APPEAR TO BE WEAKER NOW THAN IT WAS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE ELECTIONS. ROBERTO ((D'AUBUISSON)), PRESIDENT OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY AND LEADER OF THE NATIONALIST REPUBLICAN ALLIANCE (ARENA), HAS TAKEN AN INCREASINGLY INDEPENDENT STANCE AND IS BENT ON PROMOTING HIS PERSONAL POLITICAL IMAGE AT THE EXPENSE OF HIS OWN PARTY'S UNITY. D'AUBUISSON WAS THE UNEXPECTED SPONSOR OF AN AMNESTY PROPOSAL (FLATLY REJECTED BY THE MILITARY) AND AN INITIATIVE TO ESTABLISH DIALOGUE WITH THE LEFT. AS A RESULT OF THESE AND OTHER FACTORS, ARENA IS LOSING SOME OF ITS MEMBERSHIP TO THE PCN.

5. PRESIDENT MAGANA, STEERING A MODERATE COURSE WITH THE NEW GOVERNMENT, IS PLAYING A POSITIVE ROLE WHILE TAKING THE REINS OF POWER IN HAND. HE HAS ACTED DECISIVELY AND IS AN ARBITER OF POLICY DISPUTES. HE SEEMS COMMITTED TO THE REFORM PROCESS, ALBEIT PERHAPS WITH SOME MODIFICATIONS. AT PRESENT, THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS THAT THE POPULATION IS SERIOUSLY DISSATISFIED WITH MAGANA OR THE NEW GOVERNMENT.

6. WHILE THE GOVERNMENT'S IMAGE ABROAD NEEDS IMPROVEMENT, REGIONAL SOLIDARITY WITH THE MAGANA ADMINISTRATION IS IMPROVING. THIS SOLIDARITY BETWEEN EL SALVADOR AND OTHER CENTRAL AMERICAN STATES CAN BE EXPECTED TO GROW AS LONG AS THE LEFTIST INSURGENCY IS PERCEIVED AS A NICARAGUAN-CUBAN REGIONAL THREAT AND NOT MERELY AS A SALVADORAN PHENOMENON. THE RECENT PARTICIPATION OF HONDURAN TROOPS IN A COMBINED OPERATION WITH THE SALVADORAN ARMED FORCES IS TESTIMONY TO THIS DEVELOPMENT. LIKEWISE, THE EXPLICIT CRITICISM OF NICARAGUA BY THE FOREIGN MINISTERS OF THE OTHER FOUR CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES LAST WEEK WAS AN IMPORTANT FIRST. FURTHER, VENEZUELAN MILITARY AID AND POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS CONTINUE AT APPROXIMATELY THE PRE-ELECTION LEVELS.

7. THE MAGANA GOVERNMENT CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE ITS CENTRIST COURSE FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. THE MILITARY WILL CONTINUE TO ACT AS A STABILIZING FORCE OF MODERATION IN A POTENTIALLY EXPLOSIVE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT.

#### MILITARY SITUATION

8. FOLLOWING A MASSIVE OPERATION IN MORAZAN DEPARTMENT IN WHICH THE ARMY COMMITTED ITS ENTIRE STRATEGIC RESERVE AND TOOK HEAVY LOSSES, INCLUDING THE DEATH OF THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMANDER AND THE CAPTURE OF THE VICE MINISTER OF DEFENSE, THE ARMY NOW FINDS ITSELF FACED WITH WIDESPREAD INSURGENT HIT-AND-RUN

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ATTACKS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, PARTICULARLY IN THE EAST. THESE ATTACKS HAVE BEEN EFFECTIVELY DIRECTED AGAINST THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AND THE ELECTRICAL POWER INFRASTRUCTURE, AS WELL AS MILITARY TARGETS. NOT ONLY HAS THE MILITARY BEEN UNABLE TO EFFECTIVELY COUNTER THESE ATTACKS, IT HAS ALSO BEEN UNABLE TO ADEQUATELY SECURE THE PANAMERICAN HIGHWAY WHICH LINKS THE CAPITAL TO A NUMBER OF OTHER MAJOR CITIES IN THE EAST. A SERIOUS SHORTAGE OF GASOLINE AND OTHER COMMODITIES HAS STIMULATED SOME CIVILIAN CRITICISM AND LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN THE ARMED FORCES.

9. AS DEMONSTRATED BY THE MORAZAN OPERATION, THE ARMY HAS A TENDENCY TO REACT, ON A LARGE SCALE, TO TACTICAL SITUATIONS WHICH FAVOR THE GUERRILLAS. IN MORAZAN, A LONG-TIME GUERRILLA STRONGHOLD, THE ENEMY HELD MOST OF THE ADVANTAGES. EVEN SO, THERE ARE SIGNS THAT THE HIGH COMMAND UNDERSTANDS THE IMPORTANCE OF SECURING THE ECONOMICALLY VIABLE AREAS OF THE COUNTRY, SUCH AS USULUTAN AND SAN MIGUEL AND ARE AMENABLE TO DEVELOPING AN APPROPRIATE STRATEGY.

10. THE LACK OF A CENTRALIZED AND COORDINATED INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITY ADVERSELY AFFECTS THE WAR EFFORT, ALTHOUGH AN ATTEMPT IS NOW BEING MADE TO CORRECT THIS DEFICIENCY. TRADITIONALLY, THE INDIVIDUAL SECURITY SERVICES AND MILITARY COMPONENTS JEALOUSLY GUARD THEIR OWN COMPARTMENTED INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES. THE CAPABILITY TO COMBINE INFORMATION DEVELOPED FROM VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS AND PROCESS IT AT A CENTRAL POINT, AS WELL AS TO ESTABLISH NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE REQUIREMENTS, WOULD SUBSTANTIALLY ENHANCE EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY AND NEUTRALIZE THE INSURGENT INFRASTRUCTURE AND SUPPORT APPARATUS. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THERE ARE NOT SUCCESSFUL INDIVIDUAL OPERATIONS, BUT THESE ARE NOT FULLY EXPLOITED.

11. ON THE POSITIVE SIDE, THE RECENTLY ARRIVED A-37 AIRCRAFT, ACCOMPANIED BY THE O-2A FORWARD AIR CONTROL "SPOTTER" AIRCRAFT, WERE USED SUCCESSFULLY AGAINST INSURGENT POSITIONS IN MORAZAN. THIS NEW AND IMPORTANT CLOSE AIR SUPPORT CAPABILITY, IF FULLY EXPLOITED BY THE MILITARY, SHOULD PROVE HIGHLY DETRIMENTAL TO THE INSURGENTS. CONVERSELY, IF AIR STRIKES ARE NOT APPLIED TO STRICTLY MILITARY TARGETS, THE RURAL CIVILIAN POPULACE, MOST OF WHICH DOES NOT SUPPORT

THE INSURGENTS OR IS AT LEAST INDIFFERENT, COULD BECOME ALIENATED AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. THE RECENTLY ACQUIRED C-123 AIRCRAFT FILLED A SERIOUS GAP IN THE MILITARY'S AIRLIFT CAPABILITY. ANOTHER IMPORTANT AND POTENTIALLY BENEFICIAL DEVELOPMENT IS THE RECENT AGREEMENT OF THE HONDURAN ARMED FORCES TO CONDUCT COMBINED MILITARY OPERATIONS WITH THE SALVADORAN ARMY IN THE MUTUAL BORDER AREAS. THE DEPLOYMENT OF HONDURAN UNITS IN THE BORDER AREAS IN CONJUNCTION WITH SALVADORAN OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS COULD DENY THE INSURGENTS ESCAPE ROUTES AND SANCTUARIES UPON WHICH THEY HAVE DEPENDED FOR YEARS. DURING THE RECENT MORAZAN OPERATION, COORDINATION BETWEEN THE SALVADORAN AND HONDURAN MILITARY COMMANDERS IN THE AREA AND AT THE GENERAL STAFF LEVEL WAS EFFECTIVE.

12. MORALE IN THE ARMED FORCES IS DIFFICULT TO DEFINE. ATTITUDES VARY WITHIN THE ENLISTED LEVELS AND OFFICER CORPS AND FROM COMMAND TO COMMAND. THERE ARE INDICATIONS OF DISCONTENT AMONG JUNIOR AND FIELD-GRADE OFFICERS, PRIMARILY OVER THE

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HIGH COMMAND'S CONDUCT OF THE WAR. A COMMON COMPLAINT FOCUSES ON A LACK OF WELL DEFINED GOALS FOR MILITARY OPERATIONS. THIS IS COMPLICATED BY A CONSIDERABLE GAP IN COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE ARMED FORCES GENERAL STAFF AND THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMANDS. FOR EXAMPLE, IN THE EARLY STAGES OF THE MORAZAN OPERATION, THE GENERAL STAFF WAS POORLY INFORMED ON THE SITUATION. HOWEVER, AT THIS POINT, THE LEVEL OF DISCONTENT IS NOT SUFFICIENT TO ENDANGER COMMAND INTEGRITY.

13. OFFICER PERFORMANCE AND PROFESSIONALISM VARY WIDELY. SOME FIELD-GRADE OFFICERS DEMONSTRATE CONSIDERABLE LEADERSHIP QUALITIES AND POLITICAL AWARENESS (SUCH AS COLONEL ((OCHOA)) PEREZ IN CABANAS) WHILE OTHERS ARE OF LIMITED ABILITY AND MOTIVATION. LEADERSHIP IS HIGHLY PERSONALIZED WITH A RESULTANT LACK OF DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY AT THE DEPARTMENTAL LEVEL. LIKEWISE, THE CHIEF OF THE AIR FORCE FREQUENTLY FLIES COMBAT MISSIONS AND IS DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN AND PERSONALLY MANAGES PRACTICALLY ALL PHASES OF AIR FORCE ACTIVITIES, FROM OPERATIONS TO PERSONNEL AND LOGISTICS. WHILE U.S.-TRAINED CADETS AND OFFICERS SHOULD REDUCE THE LEADERSHIP PROBLEM OVER THE LONG TERM, THE LACK OF SYSTEMATIC USE OF THE FORMER, AND THE LACK OF

COMPETENT SMALL UNIT COMMANDERS, BOTH OFFICERS AND NCO'S, REMAINS A SERIOUS PROBLEM.

14. THE ARMED FORCES REMAIN A FAIRLY COHESIVE ORGANIZATION. THERE EXISTS NO IMPORTANT LEFTIST OR REVOLUTIONARY SENTIMENT AND MOST OF THE OFFICER CORPS SUPPORTS THE HIGH COMMAND'S EFFORTS TO IMPLEMENT THE ECONOMIC/AGRICULTURAL REFORMS--IF ONLY TO ENSURE CONTINUED U.S. MILITARY AID.

15. UNITY WITHIN THE HIGH COMMAND HAS IMPROVED WITH THE REMOVAL OF GENERAL JAIME ABDUL ((GUTIERREZ)), WHICH HAS NOT BEEN RESISTED BY ANY ELEMENT IN THE OFFICER CORPS. ACCORDINGLY, POLITICAL MANEUVERING HAS DIMINISHED WITHIN THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT. ON THE OTHER HAND, GENERAL GUILLERMO ((GARCIA)), MINISTER OF DEFENSE, AND COLONEL RAFAEL ((FLORES)) LIMA, CHIEF OF STAFF, ARE INVOLVED IN MONITORING THE POLITICAL PROCESS, PARTICULARLY AS IT RELATES TO D'AUBUISSON, WHOSE ACTIVITIES AND AMBITIONS ARE AN INCREASING SOURCE OF CONCERN AND IRRITATION TO THE HIGH COMMAND. AS A RESULT, GARCIA AND FLORES LIMA ARE DISTRACTED FROM EFFECTIVELY MANAGING AND DIRECTING THE GENERAL STAFF TO DEVELOP AN APPROPRIATE NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY AND INFLUENCING ITS APPLICATION AT THE DEPARTMENTAL LEVELS.

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OFFICER. ALL PORTIONS CARRY CLASSIFICATION AND CONTROLS  
OF OVERALL DOCUMENT.

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