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SECRET SAN SALVADOR 01552

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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR  
TAGS: MILI, PINR, ES  
SUBJECT: DEPARTURE OF COL. OCHOA

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Oscar Olson, Senior  
Reviewer

1. THE LONG DRAWN-OUT DRAMA OF RAMBUNCTIOUS, RECALCITRANT, AND ON OCCASION, MUTINOUS 4TH BRIGADE COMMANDER COL. SIGIFREDO OCHOA PEREZ IS APPARENTLY ABOUT TO REACH ITS DENOUEMENT.
  
2. FOLLOWING THE MEETING BETWEEN PRESIDENT DUARTE AND THE SENIOR MILITARY COMMANDERS TWO WEEKS AGO, DURING WHICH OCHOA (ALONE) ROSE TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST THE PRESIDENT'S ECONOMIC MEASURES AND WAS PEREMPTORILY SLAPPED DOWN BY MINISTER OF DEFENSE GEN. VIDES, OCHOA SENT A LETTER TO VIDES EARLIER THIS WEEK PLACING HIMSELF "AT THE DISPOSITION" OF THE MINISTER. VIDES, BLANDON, AND OTHERS AMONG THE HIGH COMMAND HAVE BEEN WRESTLING WITH HOW TO DEAL WITH THE MATTER. THEY HAVE APPARENTLY NOW DECIDED TO TERMINATE THE AGONY AND "ACCEPT" OCHOA'S "RESIGNATION".

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3. OCHOA, WHO HAS AMBITIONS TO RUN FOR PRESIDENT IN 1989, IS FACED WITH THE CONSTITUTIONAL NEED FOR A 3-YEAR SEPARATION FROM THE MILITARY BEFORE HE CAN LEGALLY RUN. OBVIOUSLY SEEKING TO FILL THE GAP LEFT BY THE DEPARTURE OF MAJ. ROBERTO D'AUBUISSON, OCHOA'S ONLY SERIOUS PROBLEM IS HOW TO KICK OFF HIS CAMPAIGN IN THE MOST SPECTACULAR POSSIBLE MANNER BEFORE THE MARCH 31, 1986 DEADLINE FOR COMPLYING WITH THE 3-YEAR RULE. PROVOKING THE GOVERNMENT TO FIRE HIM CERTAINLY QUALIFIES FOR HIS CONSIDERATION. WHETHER VIDES WOULD

GIVE HIM THAT PLEASURE IS UNCERTAIN (VIDES WAS CONSIDERING SIMPLY SENDING OCHOA A LETTER THANKING HIM FOR HIS SERVICE, SAYING HIS OFFER WAS "UNDER CONSIDERATION" -- BUT NOT ACTING ON THE OFFER UNTIL AFTER THE MARCH 31 DATE, THUS FORCING OCHOA'S HAND).

4. WHATEVER THE EVENTUAL PUBLIC EXPLANATION (FROM EITHER SIDE), OCHOA'S DEPARTURE WILL REMOVE A MAJOR THORN FROM BOTH THE GOVERNMENT'S AND THE ESAF'S RUMP. THE TIMING IS AUSPICIOUS: OCHOA'S FORTUNES ARE AT A LOW EBB, AND HE WAS CONSPICUOUSLY UNSUPPORTED BY ANY OTHER SIGNIFICANT ELEMENT WITHIN THE HIGH COMMAND DURING HIS MOST RECENT CONFRONTATIONS WITH CIVILIAN AUTHORITY OR THE ESAF LEADERSHIP. THERE IS NO DOUBTING HIS CAPACITY FOR FURTHER MISCHIEF, OR THAT HE WILL LAUNCH A FIERY POLITICAL CAREER, BUT OCHOA IS A CLASSIC CASE OF WHERE IT IS PROBABLY BETTER NOT TO HAVE HIM DOING ANYTHING INSIDE RPT INSIDE THE TENT -- EVEN IF YOU END UP HAVING TO WATERPROOF THE OUTSIDE.

PASSAGE

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