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P 062232Z SEP 91
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0541
AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PM

RELEASED IN PART B1,25X6

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 06 SAN SALVADOR 11461

DEPT FOR ARA/CEN

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Oscar Olson, Senior Reviewer

DEPT ALSO FOR INR/B

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PGOV, PINR, ES
SUBJECT: POST D'AUBUISSON ARENA: THE STRUGGLE FOR
- CONTROL

REFS: (A) SAN SALVADOR 10383, (B) SAN SALVADOR 9639

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.
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Classification Extended on 3/24/2015 ~
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2. SUMMARY: WITH PARTY FOUNDER ROBERTO D'AUBUISSON DYING OF CANCER, THE INSTITUTIONAL WEAKNESSES OF THE ONCE SEEMINGLY INVINCIBLE ARENA HAVE BEEN BROUGHT INTO HIGH RELIEF, AND THE PARTY FACES THE REAL POSSIBILITY THAT A LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE COULD PRECIPITATE A CRIPPLING SPLIT. ARENA'S ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY, SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER 30 (THE PARTY'S TENTH ANNIVERSARY), PROMISES TO BE THE SETTING FOR THE FIRST OF MANY LEADERSHIP BATTLES AS VICE-PRESIDENT FRANCISCO "CHICO" MERINO TRIES TO REMOVE SAN SALVADOR MAYOR ARMANDO CALDERON SOL AS PARTY PRESIDENT, OR AT LEAST WEAKEN HIS ROLE AS PARTY LEADER. NOR WILL THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY PUT AN END TO THE JOCKEYING; IN ADDITION TO MERINO AND CALDERON SOL, ROBERTO LLACH, BOBBY MURRAY MEZA, SIGIFREDO OCHOA PEREZ, AND MAURICIO GUTIERREZ

CASTRO ALL REPORTEDLY HAVE DESIGNS ON ARENA'S 1994 PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION. AS RECENT SALVADORAN HISTORY MAKES CLEAR, A PARTY SPLIT BEFORE AN ELECTION SPELLS POLITICAL SUICIDE FOR THOSE WHO LEAVE THE PARTY. WHETHER OR NOT ARENA SPLITS, LEADERSHIP STRUGGLES WILL SAP PARTY UNITY AND ENERGY. END SUMMARY.

ARENA: NOT NEARLY AS STRONG AS IT ONCE SEEMED

3. DURING THE 1991 ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN, ARENA (THE NATIONALIST REPUBLICAN ALLIANCE) LOOKED INDOMITABLE. IN ADDITION TO ITS SEEMINGLY LIMITLESS FUNDING, THE PARTY COUNTED ON A REMARKABLE GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATION
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WITH MEMBERS HANGING BANNERS, INSTALLING SOUND SYSTEMS, AND GENERALLY MAKING SURE THAT ARENA RALLIES RAN LIKE CLOCKWORK. BESIDES MONEY AND CAMPAIGN MACHINERY, ARENA ENJOYED PARTY DISCIPLINE AS LEADERS BOASTED OF PUTTING THE GOOD OF THE PARTY AHEAD OF PERSONAL GAIN.

4. HOW QUICKLY THINGS CHANGE. WITH PARTY FOUNDER ROBERTO D'AUBUISSON TERMINALLY ILL WITH CANCER, ARENA'S DISCIPLINE IS UNRAVELLING (SEE REFTELS), AND THE PARTY FINDS ITSELF AT A CROSSROADS. CAN ARENA BEAT THE HISTORICAL ODDS AND SURVIVE THE DEATH OF ITS FOUNDER? OR WILL IT, LIKE SO MANY CENTRAL AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTIES BEFORE IT, FALL INTO A DESTRUCTIVE LEADERSHIP BATTLE WHICH LEAVES THE PARTY WEAKENED AND DIVIDED?

5. ARENA UNDOUBTEDLY FACES AN UPHILL STRUGGLE WITHOUT D'AUBUISSON TO IMPOSE DISCIPLINE. THE HETEROGENOUS GROUPS WHICH COMPRISE THE PARTY--URBAN ELITES, SMALL FARMERS, PROFESSIONALS, RURAL SHOPKEEPERS--HAVE LITTLE IN COMMON, AND THEIR INTERESTS, ESPECIALLY ECONOMIC INTERESTS, ARE OFTEN INCOMPATIBLE. IN ADDITION, UNLIKE THE CENTRIST CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS OR THE LEFT, ARENA HAS NEITHER A WELL-DEFINED IDEOLOGY WHICH MIGHT UNITE THE PARTY NOR INTERNATIONAL BACKING TO SEE IT THROUGH BAD TIMES. THE MOST IMMEDIATE THREAT, HOWEVER, IS IN A PARTY SPLIT.

"CHICO" VS. ARMANDO AT ARENA GENERAL ASSEMBLY SEPT. 30
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6. THE FIRST IN WHAT PROMISES TO BE A SERIES OF BATTLES FOR CONTROL OF THE PARTY WILL LIKELY PLAY OUT AT THE PARTY'S SEPTEMBER 30 GENERAL ASSEMBLY WHEN THE ASSEMBLY WILL MARK ARENA'S TENTH ANNIVERSARY AND ELECT A NEW PARTY PRESIDENT AND NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (COENA). DOUBTS ABOUT D'AUBUISSON'S ABILITY TO WORK EVERYTHING OUT IN ADVANCE PROMISE REAL DRAMA IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY. VICE-PRESIDENT FRANCISCO "CHICO" MERINO, WHO FELL OUT OF FAVOR WITH D'AUBUISSON SHORTLY

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P 062232Z SEP 91
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
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AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 06 SAN SALVADOR 11461

DEPT FOR ARA/CEN

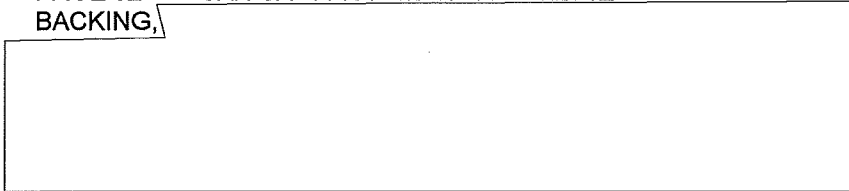
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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PGOV, PINR, ES
SUBJECT: POST D'AUBUISSON ARENA: THE STRUGGLE FOR

AFTER THE 1989 ELECTION, IS EXPECTED TO RALLY
SUPPORTERS TO PREVENT THE REELECTION OF SAN SALVADOR
MAYOR ARMANDO CALDERON SOL AS PARTY PRESIDENT.
ALTHOUGH CALDERON SOL CONTINUES TO ENJOY D'AUBUISSON'S
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BACKING,



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7. ALMOST ALL ARENEROS WE HAVE TALKED TO BELIEVE
THAT, WHEN ARENA'S GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADJOURNS, CALDERON
SOL WILL STILL BE PARTY PRESIDENT. THEY REMEMBER
MERINO'S FALL FROM GRACE, MORE THAN A YEAR AGO, WHEN
D'AUBUISSON KICKED HIM OUT OF THE ALL-IMPORTANT COENA
FOR REVEALING THE CONTENTS OF COENA DELIBERATIONS TO
THE ESAF AND FOR QUESTIONING D'AUBUISSON'S DECISION TO
MAKE CALDERON PARTY PRESIDENT. THEY BRING UP
D'AUBUISSON'S HUMILIATING TREATMENT OF MERINO AT
CALDERON SOL'S JUNE BIRTHDAY PARTY WHEN MERINO SHOWED
UP DESPITE HAVING BEEN DELIBERATELY LEFT OFF THE GUEST
LIST. D'AUBUISSON BARRED HIM FROM ENTERING, TELLING
HIM--IN FRONT OF EVERYBODY WHO IS ANYBODY IN ARENA--TO
"GET THE HELL OUT" OF A CIVILIZED GATHERING TO WHICH
HE WAS NOT INVITED. AND THEY RECALL THAT ARMANDO,
DESPITE HIS OBVIOUS SHORTCOMINGS, MANAGED TO WIN 58
PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN A FIELD OF SEVEN CANDIDATES IN
THE MARCH 1991 ELECTION FOR MAYOR OF SAN SALVADOR.

8. WHILE WE AGREE THAT MERINO'S CHANCES OF TAKING
CONTROL OF THE PARTY MACHINERY AND EFFECTIVELY
CHALLENGING CALDERON'S REELECTION BID ARE SLIM TO
NONE, HE NEVERTHELESS HAS A CONSIDERABLE BASE OF
SUPPORT AMONG ARENA'S TANK AND FILE, ESPECIALLY
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OUTSIDE OF SAN SALVADOR. HIS CAREFUL CULTIVATION OF
MID-LEVEL PARTY LEADERS HAS WON HIM THE BACKING OF
PARTY LEADERS FROM AT LEAST FIVE OR SIX DEPARTMENTS,
MANY OF WHOM SERVE AS NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEPUTIES. TO
TRY TO MAXIMIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUPPORT HE HAS,
MERINO HAS REPORTEDLY VISITED DEPARTMENTS THROUGHOUT
EL SALVADOR ARGUING THAT PARTY STATUTES FOR ELECTING
OFFICERS SHOULD BE FOLLOWED TO THE LETTER (A MORE

SUBTLE APPROACH THAN SIMPLY SAYING "DUMP ARMANDO"). THE STATUTES AS WRITTEN GIVE A VOTE TO, IN ADDITION TO THE COEC AND DEPUTIES, A SIZABLE CONTINGENT OF LEADERS FROM OUTSIDE THE CAPITAL, INCLUDING TWO DELEGATES FROM EACH DEPARTMENT, ONE FROM EACH MUNICIPALITY, AND EVERY ARENA MAYOR.

9. ALTHOUGH MERINO SEEMS TO LACK THE STRENGTH TO CHALLENGE CALDERON, HE MAY HAVE ENOUGH TO FORCE A SPLIT AND CRIPPLE THE PARTY.



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10. SHOULD D'AUBUISSON BE STRONG ENOUGH TO ATTEND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY--AND THE MOST RECENT EVIDENCE INDICATES THAT HE WILL BE--HE MAY BE ABLE TO PREEMPT THE EXPECTED MERINO CHALLENGE. MANY OF THE MID-LEVEL LEADERS FROM OUTLYING DEPARTMENTS WHO BACK MERINO ALSO WORSHIP D'AUBUISSON. THE D'AUBUISSON OF PRE-CANCER
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DAYS WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO CAST THE STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL OF THE PARTY AS A QUESTION OF LOYALTY TO HIM, TELLING PARTY ACTIVISTS "IF YOU DON'T BACK MY CANDIDATE (ARMANDO), YOU'RE LETTING ME DOWN."
ALTHOUGH ARENA ACTIVISTS ARE WELL AWARE THAT D'AUBUISSON'S DAYS ARE NUMBERED, WE BELIEVE THAT ALMOST ALL WOULD NEVERTHELESS HONOR THEIR MAXIMUM LEADER'S REQUESTS OUT OF RESPECT AND GENUINE AFFECTION. IF D'AUBUISSON IS UNABLE TO NEUTRALIZE MERINO BY SIMPLY DESTROYING HIS STANDING IN THE PARTY, D'AUBUISSON, OR--IN HIS ABSENCE--COENA MEMBERS, MAY

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 06 SAN SALVADOR 11461

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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
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TRY TO CO-OPT MERINO BY OFFERING HIM AND/OR ONE OR TWO
OF HIS SUPPORTERS A POSITION(S) ON THE COENA SLATE OF
NOMINEES. UNDER PRESENT PARTY CUSTOM, THE COENA
PRESENTS A SLATE OF OFFICERS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.
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THUS, ANY CHALLENGE WOULD HAVE TO BE AGAINST
INDIVIDUALS NOMINATED BY THE COENA.

11. ANOTHER POSSIBLE SCENARIO CASTS LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT ROBERTO ANGULO AS A COMPROMISE
CANDIDATE FOR LEADERSHIP OF THE PARTY SHOULD THAT BE
THE ONLY WAY TO AVOID A SPLIT BETWEEN ARMANDO'S AND
MERINO'S SUPPORTERS. UNLIKE ARMANDO, ANGULO IS WIDELY
RECOGNIZED AS CLEARLY NOT PRESIDENTIAL MATERIAL
(ANGULO ROSE TO POWER LARGELY BECAUSE HE IS
D'AUBUISSON'S BROTHER-IN-LAW), SO HE WOULD BE SEEN BY
THOSE WISHING TO KEEP THE PARTY'S OPTIONS OPEN AS LESS
THREATENING THAN THE STILL-POPULAR SAN SALVADOR
MAYOR. AND UNLIKE MERINO, ANGULO'S LOYALTY TO THE
PARTY IS UNQUESTIONED. ALTHOUGH ANGULO IS NO
BRILLIANT POLITICAL STRATEGIST, HE IS APPRECIATED FOR
HIS DEDICATION AND COULD BE TRUSTED TO BE A FAITHFUL
CARETAKER OF D'AUBUISSON'S ARENA. ANGULO, HOWEVER,

MAY BE ALMOST AS UNACCEPTABLE TO THE MERINO SUPPORTERS AS CALDERON, SINCE MANY BLAME HIM FOR FUELING THE D'AUBUISSON-MERINO DISPUTE IN 1989. THEY ALSO BLAME HIM FOR USING HIS SISTER TO DISTANCE D'AUBUISSON FROM MANY OF HIS EARLY SUPPORTERS WHO ARE, BY-AND-LARGE, MERINO BACKERS NOW.

AFTER THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY--MORE STRUGGLES AHEAD

12. WHATEVER THE OUTCOME OF THE SEPTEMBER 30 GENERAL ASSEMBLY, ARENA FACES CONTINUED LEADERSHIP STRUGGLES.

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ONCE A PARTY PRESIDENT IS ELECTED TO A NEW TWO-YEAR TERM, THE JOCKEYING WILL BEGIN IN EARNEST FOR THE REAL PRIZE, THE PARTY'S PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION FOR THE 1994 ELECTIONS, WHICH ARENA ONLY SIX MONTHS AGO SEEMED DESTINED TO WIN.

13. ALTHOUGH THE PARTY PRESIDENCY WAS, IN CRISTIANI'S CASE AT LEAST, THE STEPPING STONE TO THE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION AND THEN THE PRESIDENCY, THE TWO POSITIONS HAVE DIFFERENT REQUIREMENTS. THE SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE FOR PARTY PRESIDENT MUST BE ABLE TO MUSTER EXTENSIVE SUPPORT WITHIN THE PARTY (SOMETHING CRISTIANI MANAGED ONLY WITH D'AUBUISSON'S FULL BACKING), BUT HE DOES NOT NECESSARILY HAVE TO BE A POLITICAL MODERATE WHO WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO A MAJORITY OF VOTERS. TO WIN THE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION, HOWEVER, A CANDIDATE DOES NOT NECESSARILY NEED EXTENSIVE BACKING WITHIN THE PARTY (AS LONG AS HE HAS A POWERFUL PATRON TO ARRANUX R HZS THINGS FOR HIM), BUT HE MUST HAVE A WIDE ENOUGH APPEAL TO ATTRACT THE VOTES OF THE MAJORITY OF THE ELECTORATE.

14. THE BATTLE FOR CONTROL OF THE PARTY IS CURRENTLY LIMITED TO THE TWO OR THREE FIGURES--CALDERON SOL, MERINO, AND POSSIBLY ANGULO--WHO HAVE, THROUGH DEDICATION TO THE PARTY, DEVELOPED ENOUGH OF A FOLLOWING INSIDE ARENA TO HAVE A SHOT AT TAKING OVER THE REINS. THE FIELD OF POTENTIAL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES IS WIDER, HOWEVER, SINCE A STRONG FOLLOWING WITHIN THE PARTY, WHILE DESIRABLE, IS NOT ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY. WHILE ARMANDO CALDERON SOL IS STILL THE
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FAVORITE TO WIN THE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION, OTHER NAMES ARE MENTIONED WITH INCREASING FREQUENCY.

ROBERTO LLACH

15. ROBERTO LLACH, COENA MEMBER AND COUSIN OF CRISTIANI'S WIFE MARGARITA, IS THE ANSWER FOR THOSE SEEKING TO REPLACE FREDY CRISTIANI WITH THE NEAREST THING TO A CLONE. LIKE CRISTIANI, LLACH IS BRILLIANT, AMERICAN-EDUCATED, WEALTHY, SMOOTH. SOME SAY LLACH HAS CRISTIANI'S BACKING AND THE BACKING OF OTHER KEY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 04 OF 06 SAN SALVADOR 11461

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MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH AND THE ECONOMIC ELITE. CRISTIANI WAS SELECTED AS CANDIDATE IN 1989, AHEAD OF LONGTIME PARTY ACTIVISTS (SUCH AS CALDERON SOL, WHO FELT THAT HE AND NOT FREDY SHOULD HAVE BEEN ARENA'S
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CANDIDATE), ONLY BECAUSE OF D'AUBUISSON'S BACKING. DESPITE HIS GREAT POPULARITY, CRISTIANI HAS RUFFLED MORE THAN A FEW PARTY FEATHERS BY LIMITING PATRONAGE AND KEEPING MOST PARTY HACKS OUT OF THE POLICY PROCESS. IN 1989, CRISTIANI'S NOMINATION, AND THE IMPROVED CHANCES OF VICTORY IT BROUGHT THE PARTY, WERE WELCOMED BY ARENEROS EAGER FOR VICTORY. NOW, IN MID-1991, THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE THAT MANY ACTIVISTS FEEL THEY NEED TO GO TO AN OUTSIDER, SUCH AS LLACH, IN ORDER TO ENSURE VICTORY. THUS, WITHOUT D'AUBUISSON'S SUPPORT--AND HE WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO SUPPORT LLACH EVEN IF HE SURVIVE LONG ENOUGH TO BE KINGMAKER IN 1994--LLACH'S CHANCES OF BECOMING ARENA'S PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, ARE SLIM.

16. LLACH'S ONLY REAL CHANCE TO WIN ARENA'S NOMINATION WOULD BE IF CRISTIANI WAS WILLING TO ABANDON HIS HANDS-OFF-PARTY-MATTERS APPROACH AND THROW HIS WEIGHT BEHIND HIS COUSIN-IN-LAW. SUCH ACTION WOULD THROW THE PARTY INTO TURMOIL. OFF THE BAT, CRISTIANI CAN FORGET WINNING THE BACKING OF MERINO'S SUPPORTERS WHO WOULD BE DELIGHTED BY THE SPECTACLE OF A MAJOR FIGHT IN THE OTHER PARTY FACTION. CRISTIANI'S BASE OF SUPPORT SHOULD BE, BY ALL RIGHTS, THE "ELITE," THE MAJOR PARTY CONTRIBUTORS, THE TECHNOCRATS, PARTY ACTIVISTS IN THE CAPITAL, AND OTHER "MODERATES." MOST OF THEM, HOWEVER, CURRENTLY SUPPORT CALDERON AND WOULD FIND THEMSELVES IN A BIND. THEIR IMMEDIATE REACTION WOULD BE TO TRY AND PERSUADE EITHER CALDERON OR LLACH TO BACK-OFF. CALDERON, WHO FEELS HE WAS PASSED OVER LAST TIME, IS NOT LIKELY TO VOLUNTEER TO ABANDON HIS BID, LEAVING
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LLACH (AND CRISTIANI), NEITHER OF WHOM IS FAMOUS FOR HAVING A STOMACH FOR A POLITICAL FIGHT, TO EITHER GIVE-UP OR FORCE THEIR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS INTO CHOOSING SIDES, SOMETHING MOST WOULD RESIST.

17. IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO TELL WHETHER CRISTIANI IS WILLING TO DO THAT AND, FOR THAT MATTER, WHETHER HIS SUPPORT WOULD BE ENOUGH TO WIN THE POSITION FOR LLACH. MOREOVER, BEFORE TAKING THIS COURSE OF ACTION,

CRISTIANI, THE MAIN BENEFITARY OF THE PDC 1989 SPLIT, IS LIKELY TO REMEMBER THAT PRESIDENT DUARTE, WHO HAD FAR GREATER CONTROL OVER HIS OWN PARTY'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS THAN CRISTIANI HAS EVER HAD OVER ARENA, FAILED MISERABLY IN 1989 WHEN HE SOUGHT TO IMPOSE ABRAHAM RODRIGUEZ (HIS OWN VERSION OF LLACH) ON THE PDC. THE EARLY LINE HERE IS THAT, BARRING THE UNFORESEEN (SUCH AS A MAJOR SCANDAL INVOLVING CALDERON), CRISTIANI AND LLACH WILL EITHER NOT TRY TO PUSH CALDERON OUT OR GIVE UP THE IDEA IF THE MAYOR RESISTS.

ROBERTO MURRAY MEZA

18. ANOTHER PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFUL IS ROBERTO MURRAY MEZA, OWNER AND PRESIDENT OF LA CONSTANCIA, EL SALVADOR'S ONLY BREWERY, AND A COMPETENT, RESPECTED BUSINESS LEADER WITH A SOCIAL CONSCIENCE. MURRAY MEZA, THE SON OF AN AMERICAN MOTHER AND SALVADORAN FATHER, HAS IMPECCABLE EDUCATIONAL CREDENTIALS--YALE UNDERGRAD AND HARVARD MBA--AND MAY BE JUST A LITTLE TOO PREPPY FOR MOST SALVADORAN TASTES. HIS GREATEST,
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AND LIKELY FATAL, SHORTCOMING, HOWEVER, IS THAT HE HAS NOT PAID HIS PARTY DUES. MURRAY MEZA'S CONNECTION TO ARENA IS SO TENUOUS, IN FACT, THAT HE IS JUST AS OFTEN NAMED AS A POSSIBLE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE ON THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC TICKET AS ON THE ARENA TICKET. IN CASE OF AN ARENA SPLIT, MURRAY MEZA MIGHT EMERGE AS A VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE TO WIN THE VOTES--AND CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS--OF EL SALVADOR'S BUSINESS ELITES.

SIGIFREDO OCHOA PEREZ

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19. ANOTHER ARENERO WHO WOULD BE PRESIDENT IS
SIGIFREDO OCHOA PEREZ, THE MERCURIAL PRESIDENT OF CEL,
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THE ELECTRIC COMPANY. LIKE D'AUBUISSON, AN EX-MILITARY
OFFICER, OCHOA IS POPULAR WITH THE RATHER HARD-LINE,
VAGUELY-THUGGISH ELEMENT THAT FLOCKS TO ARENA
RALLIES. HE IS SO UNPREDICTABLE, HOWEVER, THAT EVEN
FELLOW PARTY MEMBERS REGARD HIM AS A LOOSE CANNON.
SINCE OCHOA ALL BUT PERSONIFIES THE NUT WING OF ARENA,
HE STANDS VIRTUALLY NO CHANCE OF WINNING A MAJORITY IN
A NATIONAL ELECTION.

MAURICIO GUTIERA

NLRJTYIAAAAAAAAAAAAA

20. FINALLY, SUPREME COURT PRESIDENT AND FORMER VICE
PRESIDENT MAURICIO GUTIERREZ CASTRO ALSO ASPIRES TO
THE ARENA PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION. ALTHOUGH
INTELLIGENT AND A PRIME EXAMPLE OF ARENA'S CREDO OF
PULLING ONESELF UP BY THE BOOTSTRAPS, HE IS AN
ILLEGITIMATE CHILD WHO ACQUIRED HIS BROAD EDUCATION

LARGELY ON HIS OWN. IT IS THEREFORE HARD TO IMAGINE ARENA'S ELITE EMBRACING GUTIERREZ. BESIDES, GUTIERREZ HAS NO FINANCIAL BACKING, CAN BE IRRITATING, AND, AS FAR AS WE CAN TELL, HAS NO RANK-AND-FILE FOLLOWING IN THE PARTY. IN ADDITION, DURING HIS TENURE AS SUPREME COURT PRESIDENT, HE HAS MADE MANY ENEMIES--THE MILITARY IS FURIOUS ABOUT HIS PRESSURE ON THE JESUIT CASE, AND ELITES RESENT HIS WORK ON THE BANCO AGRICOLA CASE--MAKING HIS SELECTION AS A DARK HORSE CANDIDATE UNLIKELY.

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THE QUESTION OF TIMING

21. THE TIMING OF ANY EVENTUAL SPLIT IN ARENA IS ALSO IMPORTANT. IF MERINO WERE TO LEAVE THE PARTY NEXT MONTH AS A RESULT OF A ROW AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, THE PARTY, ALTHOUGH IT WOULD BE WEAKENED, WOULD PROBABLY HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO REBUILD BEFORE THE 1994 CAMPAIGN. IF, HOWEVER, A SPLIT IS DELAYED UNTIL SAY, THE FALL OF 1992 OR LATER, IT PROMISES TO BE SO DAMAGING TO THE PARTY THAT IT MAY BE AVERTED IN THE INTEREST OF SELF-PRESERVATION.

22. NO ONE IS LIKELY TO FORGET WHAT HAPPENED TO JULIO ADOLFO "FITO" REY PRENDES AFTER HE LOST THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION IN 1988 TO FIDEL CHAVEZ MENA. ALTHOUGH REY PRENDES TOOK TWO-THIRDS OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC DEPUTIES WITH HIM AND FORMED A NEW PARTY, THE AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT (MAC), THREE YEARS LATER MAC HAS BEEN REDUCED TO ONE DEPUTY IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, AND REY PRENDES IS UNEMPLOYED. THIS LESSON IS UNLIKELY TO BE LOST ON ARENA LEADERS RIGHT BEFORE AN ELECTION IN WHICH ALL OFFICES--FROM PRESIDENT TO ASSEMBLY DEPUTIES TO LOCAL MAYORS--ARE UP FOR GRABS. ARENA'S ELECTED OFFICIALS KNOW ALL TOO WELL THAT IT'S THE PARTY, NOT THE PERSON, THAT COUNTS IN MOST RACES, SO LEAVING ARENA TO FORM A NEW PARTY JUST BEFORE ELECTIONS VIRTUALLY GUARANTEES DEFEAT. STILL, IT'S A MISTAKE REY PRENDES, ONE OF EL SALVADOR'S SAVVIEST POLITICIANS, MADE AND IT REMAINS POSSIBLE THAT SOME ARENA LEADERS WOULD PREFER RISKING

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POLITICAL SUICIDE TO ACCEPTING DEFEAT.

THE FUTURE OF ARENA

23. D'AUBUISSON--PARTY FOUNDER, CHARISMATIC LEADER, ENFORCER OF DISCIPLINE, AND SHREWD POLITICAL STRATEGIST--IS SIMPLY IRREPLACEABLE, AND, NO MATTER HOW THE LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE PLAYS ITSELF OUT, ARENA WILL BE WEAKENED BY D'AUBUISSON'S DEMISE. EVEN NOW, WHILE D'AUBUISSON IS STILL ABLE TO KEEP HIS HAND IN

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ACTION ARA-01

INFO LOG-00 ACDA-13 ADS-00 AMAD-01 CIAE-00 C-01 DODE-00
ANHR-01 HA-09 H-01 INRE-00 INR-01 L-03 NSAE-00
NSCE-00 OMB-01 PA-01 PM-01 PRS-01 P-01 SNP-01
SP-01 SS-01 TRSE-00 T-01 USIE-00 /040W
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P 062232Z SEP 91
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0546
AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 06 OF 06 SAN SALVADOR 11461

DEPT FOR ARA/CEN

DEPT ALSO FOR INR/B

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PGOV, PINR, ES
SUBJECT: POST D'AUBUISSON ARENA: THE STRUGGLE FOR
PARTY AFFAIRS, ARENA IS HAVING PROBLEMS MAKING

DECISIONS AND MAINTAINING DISCIPLINE. SUCH PROBLEMS
CAN ONLY BE EXPECTED TO WORSEN WHEN D'AUBUISSON
FINALLY SUCCUMBS TO CANCER AND LEADERSHIP STRUGGLES
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CONSUME THE PARTY.

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