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(S///CIA-IUO/NF) SUBJ: ARENA PARTY ATTEMPTS TO PROVOKE A MILITARY COUP

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Central Intelligence Agency

29 December 1984

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COUNTRY: EL SALVADOR

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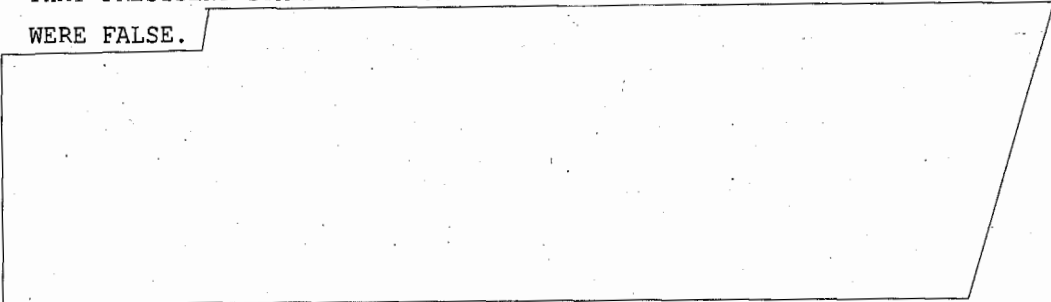
TEXT: 1. LT. COL. ROBERTO MAURICIO ((STABEN)), COMMANDER OF THE ARCE IMMEDIATE REACTION BATTALION AND WELL KNOWN AS LEADING RIGHTIST IN THE SALVADORAN ARMY, TOLD A CLOSE CONFIDANT ON 27 DECEMBER 1984 THAT THE NATIONALIST REPUBLICAN ALLIANCE (ARENA) PARTY HAS BEEN PROVOKING FOURTH BRIGADE COMMANDER, LT. COL. SIGFREDO ((OCHOA)) PEREZ INTO ATTEMPTING A MILITARY COUP IN EL SALVADOR. STABEN SAID THAT ARENA PARTY DEPUTY, JUAN ANTONIO ((MARTINEZ)) VARELA, AND SEVERAL ARENA PARTY LEADING FIGURES INCLUDING ARTURO ((MASON)), JULIO ((RANK)), TITO ((SACA)), BILLY ((KORN)) AND BOBBY MURRY ((MEZA)) PERSONALLY MET WITH LT. COL. OCHOA IN MID-DECEMBER. THEY TOLD OCHOA THEY HAD INSIDE INFORMATION THAT PRESIDENT JOSE NAPOLEON ((DUARTE)) PLANNED TO PROMOTE VICE-MINISTER OF PUBLIC SECURITY, COLONEL CARLOS REYNALDO ((LOPEZ)) NUILA TO THE RANK OF GENERAL AND TO MAKE HIM MINISTER OF DEFENSE AS SOON AS GENERAL CARLOS EUGENIO ((VIDES)) CASANOVA RETIRED IN EARLY 1985.

2. LT. COL. STABEN SAID THAT LT. COL. OCHOA IS VERY MUCH

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UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF THE ARENA PARTY AND THAT HE IMMEDIATELY BEGAN TO SOLICIT ASSISTANCE FROM OTHER MILITARY COMMANDERS TO STAGE A COUP D'ETAT OVER THE ISSUE OF WHAT HE PERCEIVED AS AN EXCESSIVE INTERFERENCE BY PRESIDENT DUARTE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF THE SALVADORAN MILITARY. STABEN SAID THAT THESE SAME ARENA PARTY LEADERS HAD APPROACHED HIM (STABEN) ON 17 DECEMBER 1984 WITH THE SAME STORY ABOUT THE PROMOTION OF LOPEZ NUILA. STABEN STATED THAT HE IMMEDIATELY WENT TO GENERAL VIDES CASANOVA AND WAS TOLD THAT THERE IS NO SUBSTANCE TO THE ARENA RUMOR AND THAT VIDES HIMSELF HAD RECEIVED THE ASSURANCE OF PRESIDENT DUARTE THAT NO ATTEMPT WOULD BE MADE TO FORCE THE PROMOTION OF LOPEZ NUILA AT THIS TIME.

3. ACCORDING TO STABEN, GENERAL VIDES ALSO TOLD OCHOA THAT LOPEZ NUILA WOULD NOT BE PROMOTED AT THIS TIME. HOWEVER, LT. COL. OCHOA CONTINUED TO BELIEVE THE ARENA STORY AND BEGAN TO CONTACT OTHER RIGHTIST MILITARY OFFICERS TO GAIN SUPPORT FOR A COUP PLAN. OFFICERS CONTACTED BY OCHOA INCLUDED STABEN OF THE ARCE BATTALION; LT. COL. GILBERTO ((RUBIO)), C-II, ESTADO MAYOR CONJUNTO (EMC-II); LT. COL. JOAQUIN EDUARDO ((ZACAPA)), EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE FIRST BRIGADE; LT. COL. OSCAR RODOLFO ((CAMPOS)) AYALA, COMMANDER, FIFTH MILITARY ZONE; LT. COL. RENE EMILIO ((PONCE)), C-III (EMC-III); LT. COL. MAURICIO ERNESTO ((VARGAS)), ATONAL IMMEDIATE REACTION BATTALION (BIRI) COMMANDER; AND LT. COL. JUAN CARLOS ((CARILLO)) SCHLEUKER, COMMANDER OF BIRI ATLATL. STABEN ALSO SAID THAT COLONEL JUAN RAFAEL ((BUSTILLO)) WAS APPROACHED INDEPENDENTLY BY ARENA PARTY LEADERS OFFERING TO SUPPORT HIM IF HE WOULD ATTEMPT A COUP. ACCORDING TO STABEN, COL. BUSTILLO WENT TO GENERAL VIDES CASANOVA AND REPORTED THIS APPROACH AND WAS TOLD THAT HE SHOULD IGNORE ANEUVER BY THE ARENA PARTY AND THAT THE RUMORS THAT PRESIDENT DUARTE INTENDED TO MAKE LOPEZ NUILA A GENERAL WERE FALSE.



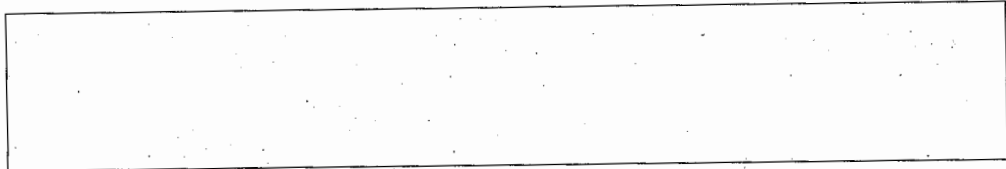
4. STABEN SAID THAT IF THE RUMOR OF LOPEZ NUILA BEING PROMOTED TO GENERAL BY PRESIDENT DUARTE HAD BEEN TRUE, THE MILITARY COMBAT OFFICERS, INCLUDING CHIEF OF THE JOINT GENERAL STAFF, COLONEL ADOLFO ONCECIFERO ((BLANDON)), WOULD HAVE

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SUPPORTED A COUP ATTEMPT. STABEN SAID THAT HE ANTICIPATES THAT COLONEL BLANDON WILL REPLACE GENERAL VIDES CASANOVA AS THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE WHEN THE LATER RETIRES IN 1985. STABEN ALSO SPECULATED THAT COLONEL BUSTILLO, ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF GENERAL VIDES CASANOVA, WILL BECOME THE CHIEF OF THE JOINT GENERAL STAFF REPLACING COLONEL BLANDON.



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