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Document:DIRR -0000 202394 Subject: COUP PLOTTING: REQUEST FOR [redacted] (b)(1)
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SUBJECT: COUP PLOTTING: REQUEST FOR [redacted] (b)(1)
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1. ALL YOUR REPORTING ON RECENT SPATE OF COUP RUMORS HAS BEEN VERY WELL RECEIVED HERE. WOULD LIKE YOU TO DO TWO THINGS: (1) SUBMIT INFO ON 29 DECEMBER SENIOR MILITARY COMMANDERS' MEETING AS INTEL, TO ROUND OUT THE SERIES: AND (2) ONCE THE DUST HAS SETTLED ENOUGH TO MAKE SOME SENSE OF THE SITUATION, REQUEST YOU SUBMIT AN [redacted] ON POSSIBLE/POTENTIAL MOVES AGAINST DUARTE. WE LEAVE TO YOU THE TIMING OF THE [redacted]

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2. FYI: FOLLOWING IS SPOT COMMENTARY PREPARED EVENING 29 DEC FOR PASSAGE TO [redacted]

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"SPOT COMMENTARY: COUP PLOTTING IN EL SALVADOR"

REPORTING OVER THE PAST COUPLE OF DAYS HAS FOCUSED ON THE POSSIBILITY OF A MILITARY COUP AGAINST PRESIDENT DUARTE, WITH AIR FORCE COMMANDER COL. BUSTILLO, CHIEF OF THE JOINT STAFF COL. BLANDON, AND FOURTH BRIGADE COMMANDER LT. COL. OCHOA AS LEADERS OF THE MOVEMENT. THESE THREE OFFICERS, AND SOME OTHERS, FEARED THAT PRESIDENT DUARTE WOULD ATTEMPT TO HAVE DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER FOR PUBLIC SECURITY COL. LOPEZ NUILA PROMOTED TO GENERAL OFFICER RANK. COL. LOPEZ HAS ALREADY BEEN PASSED OVER FOR PROMOTION TO GENERAL ONCE: IN ADDITION, HE IS A "SERVICE" OFFICER RATHER THAN A "COMBAT" OFFICER. LT. COL. OCHOA REPORTEDLY SAID THAT EVEN IF DUARTE BACKED DOWN ON LOPEZ NUILA'S PROMOTION, THE MILITARY COULD NO LONGER TOLERATE THE PRESIDENT'S MEDDLING IN MILITARY AFFAIRS. DEMOCRATIC ACTION POLITICAL PARTY, WHICH HAS BEEN ALLIED WITH DUARTE, NOW SUPPORT THE PRESIDENT'S REMOVAL FROM OFFICE. THE SOURCE ADDED THAT THE PARTY IS AWARE THAT SEVERAL MILITARY OFFICERS, INCLUDING COLS. BUSTILLO AND BLANDON AND LT. COL. OCHOA, ARE PLANNING TO REMOVE DUARTE IN MID-JANUARY.

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[redacted] HOWEVER, BUSTILLO HAS REJECTED THE IDEA OF A COUP ATTEMPT AGAINST DUARTE. BUSTILLO WAS TOLD BY DEFENSE MINISTER VIDES CASANOVA THAT DUARTE WOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO HAVE LOPEZ NUILA PROMOTED, AND THAT IT IS LIKELY THAT COL. BLANDON WILL REPLACE

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GENERAL VIDES AS DEFENSE MINISTER WHEN VIDES RETIRES LATER IN 1985.

GENERAL VIDES CALLED A SPECIAL MEETING OF SENIOR MILITARY COMMANDERS ON THE MORNING OF 29 DECEMBER. HE TOLD THE ASSEMBLED OFFICERS THAT ONLY TWO NAMES WERE ON THE PROMOTION LIST FOR GENERAL: COLS. BUSTILLO AND BLANDON. VIDES THEN SAID THAT IT WAS TIME TO KNOCK OFF THE COUP TALK AND GET BACK TO WORK." THE MEETING BROKE UP WITH GENERAL AGREEMENT ON GETTING BACK TO THE WAR.

COMMENT: VIDES' ACTION AT THE 29 DECEMBER MEETING HAS TAKEN THE HEAT OFF FOR THE MOMENT. ALTHOUGH COLS. BUSTILLO AND BLANDON, AND LT. COL. OCHOA, ARE OFFICERS WITH STRONG TIES TO THE EXTREME RIGHT, AND PROBABLY HAVE BEEN ANGERED BY SOME OF PRESIDENT DUARTE'S RECENT ACTIONS (THE CEASEFIRE ISSUE WITH THE INSURGENTS: THE CASHIERING OF LT. LOPEZ SIBRIAN FROM THE MILITARY DESPITE HIS HAVING BEEN ABSOLVED BY THE SALVADORAN JUDICIARY FROM COMPLICITY IN THE SHERATON MURDERS), THEY ARE UNLIKELY TO TAKE PRECIPITATE ACTION AGAINST HIM.

NONETHELESS, THE SITUATION IS STILL FRAGILE, AND WHILE THERE IS MUCH LESS LIKELIHOOD OF A MOVE AGAINST DUARTE NOW THAN THERE APPEARED TO BE TWO DAYS AGO, THE ISSUE IS FAR FROM SETTLED. DUARTE STILL FACES CONSIDERABLE OPPOSITION TO HIS LINE-ITEM VETO OF ELECTORAL LEGISLATION (WHICH OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES BELIEVE TO BE UNCONSTITUTIONAL), AND THERE IS ALSO CONTINUING OPPOSITION TO THE PEACE TALKS WITH THE INSURGENTS."

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