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Document [redacted] Subject: NICARAGUA/EL SALVADOR UPDATE, 30 JAN - 5 FEB 1986C

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SUBJECT: NICARAGUA/EL SALVADOR UPDATE, 30 JAN - 5 FEB 1986

1. FOLLOWING BETWEEN TEAR LINES IS THE NICARAGUA AND EL SALVADOR TACTICAL UPDATE FOR 30 JANUARY - 5 FEBRUARY. IT MAY BE SHARED WITH APPROPRIATELY-CLEARED EMBASSY OFFICERS ON A BACKGROUND USE ONLY BASIS.

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NICARAGUA AND EL SALVADOR TACTICAL UPDATE
WEEK OF 30 JANUARY - 5 FEBRUARY 1986

OVERVIEW

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EL SALVADOR

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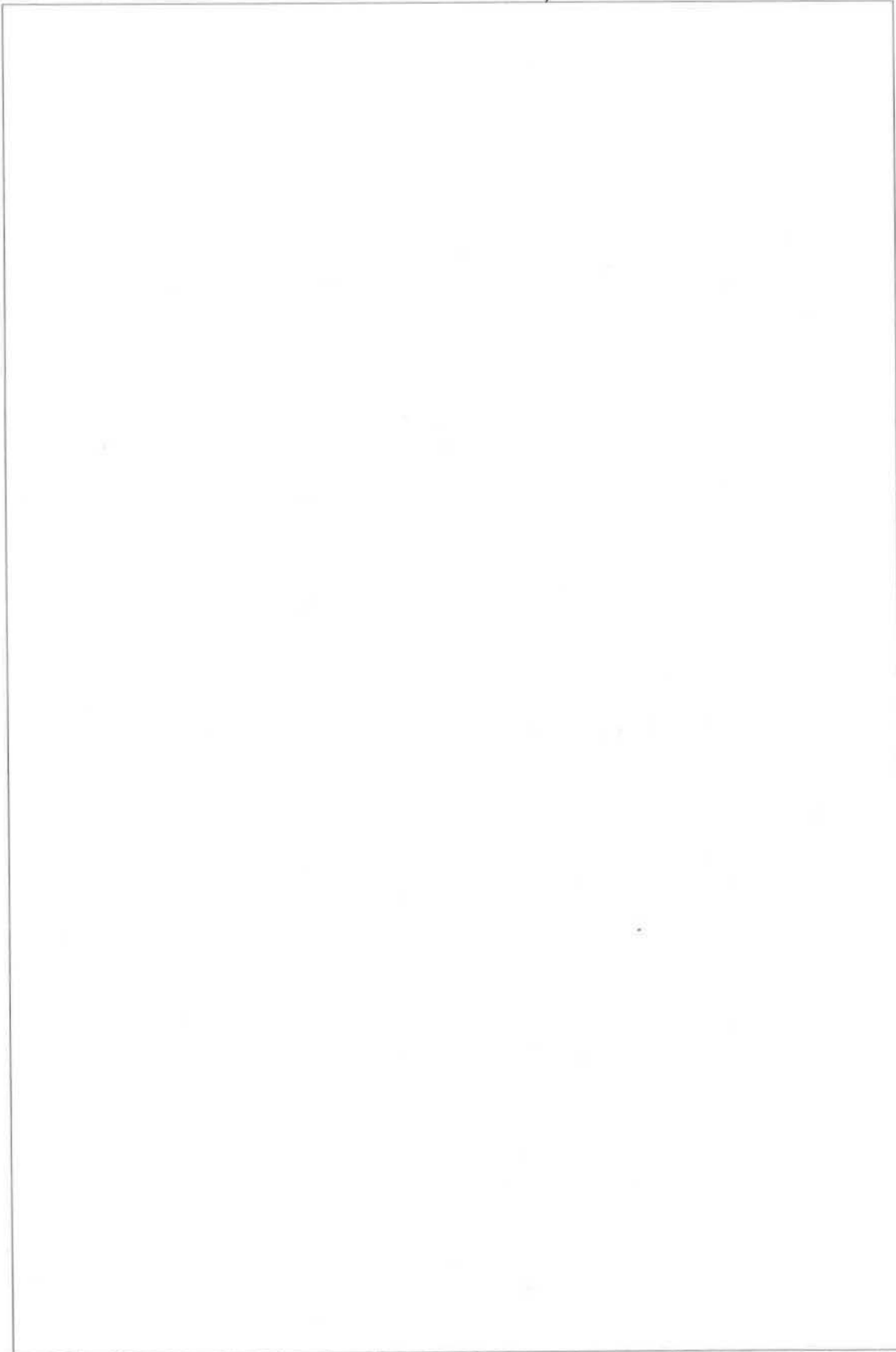
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THE ARMED FORCES MAINTAINED PRESSURE ON THE GUERRILLAS IN THE GUAZAPA VOLCANO AREA AND LAUNCHED NEW OFFENSIVES IN TWO NORTHERN DEPARTMENTS. THE MILITARY IS ATTEMPTING TO INTERDICT GUERRILLAS -- PARTICULARLY IN THE SAN SALVADOR AREA -- AS THEY FLEE FROM THE FIGHTING AROUND GUAZAPA. REBEL ACTIVITY CONTINUED TO BE RELATIVELY LIGHT THIS WEEK. THERE IS EVIDENCE, HOWEVER, THAT THE INSURGENTS MAY BE PLANNING A NEW TERRORIST ATTACK AGAINST U.S. PERSONNEL IN EL SALVADOR, AND OUR EMBASSY HAS PLACED NEW RESTRICTIONS ON THE ACTIVITIES OF MISSION PERSONNEL. THE GUERRILLAS ANNOUNCED A SECOND TRAVEL BAN THIS YEAR AND CONTINUED TO SABOTAGE THE ELECTRICAL GRID AND AGRICULTURAL HARVESTS. (S NF) (b)(3) NatSecAct

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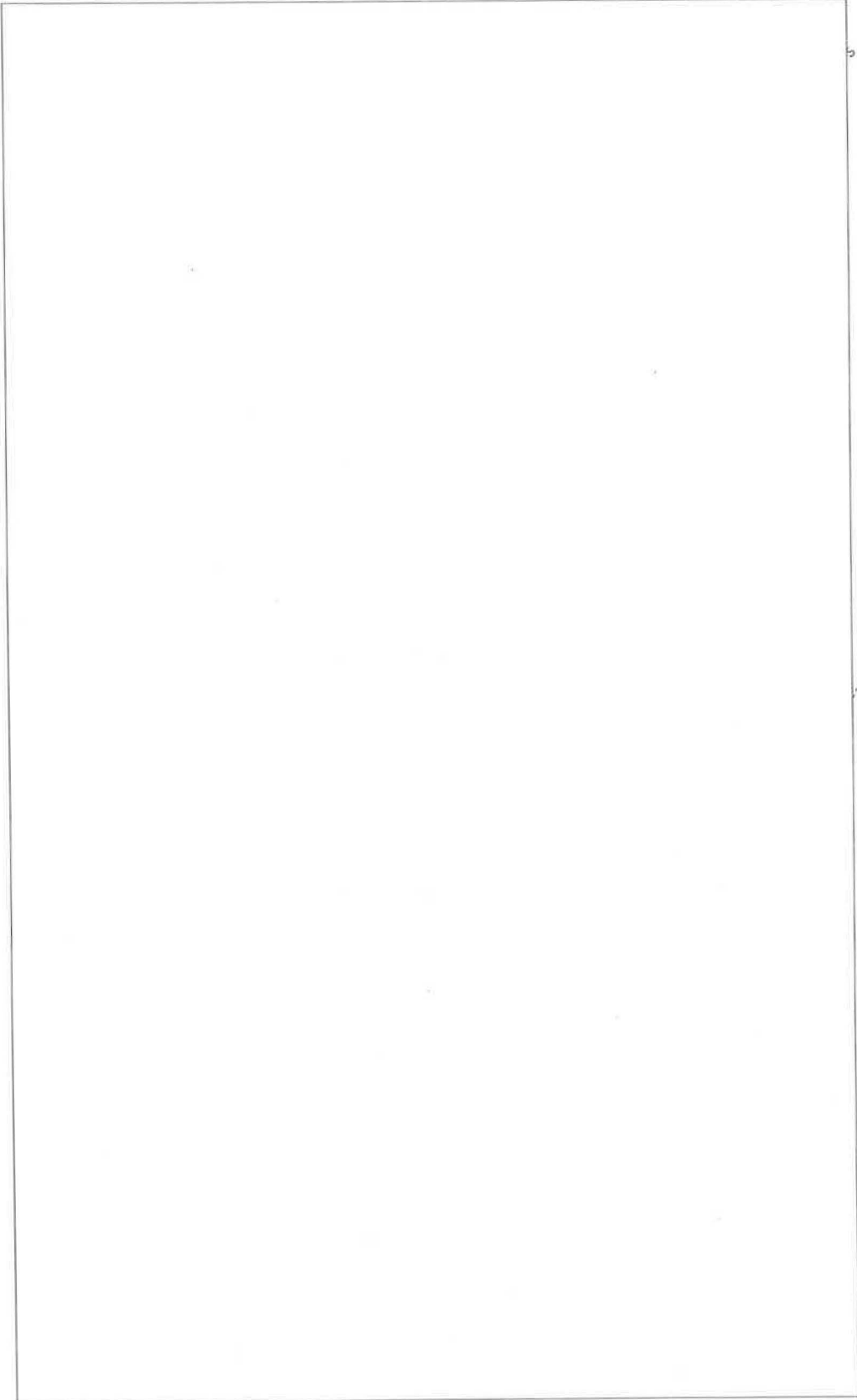
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SALVADORAN DEVELOPMENTS

GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY

OPERATION PHOENIX" -- NOW IN ITS FOURTH WEEK -- CONTINUED TO PUT PRESSURE ON REBELS IN THE GUAZAPA VOLCANO AREA. SALVADORAN OFFICIALS AND OUR EMBASSY ARE INCREASINGLY OPTIMISTIC THAT THE OPERATION HAS SERIOUSLY HURT THE REBELS.

X-- OUR [REDACTED] REPORTED THAT THERE HAVE BEEN 66 (b)(1) ENCOUNTERS WITH THE GUERRILLAS TO DATE. TOTAL CASUALTY FIGURES (b)(3) NatSecAct REPORTED BY SALVADORAN MILITARY SOURCES -- ARE: 51 GUERRILLAS KILLED AND AN UNKNOWN NUMBER WOUNDED COMPARED TO SEVEN GOVERNMENT DEAD AND 68 WOUNDED. ALMOST ALL GOVERNMENT CASUALTIES CONTINUE TO BE CAUSED BY REBEL MINES. (b)(1) (b)(3) NatSecAct

X-- [REDACTED] INDICATED THAT THE REBELS ARE ATTEMPTING TO CACHE WEAPONS, TRANSPORT DEAD AND WOUNDED TO MORE DISTANT BASE CAMPS, AND, WHERE POSSIBLE, BLEND IN WITH THE CIVILIAN POPULATION.

X-- [REDACTED] INDICATED THAT THE OPERATION WILL CONTINUE INDEFINITELY -- ALBEIT AT A REDUCED LEVEL. IN ADDITION TO PATROLLING THE AREA, UNITS IN GUAZAPA AND SUCHITOTO ARE ENGAGED IN CIVIC ACTION PROJECTS. THE ARMY SAID IT PLANS TO ASSIGN ONE ELITE IMMEDIATE REACTION BATTALION AND TWO ANTI-TERRORIST INFANTRY BATTALIONS PERMANENTLY IN THE AREA. (b)(1) (b)(3) NatSecAct

X-- ARMY AND SECURITY FORCES REPORTEDLY ARE SET TO SWEEP AREAS NORTH OF THE CAPITAL AND SPECIFIC BARRIOS IN SAN SALVADOR IN AN EFFORT TO STEM THE INFILTRATION OF GUERRILLAS FLEEING THE FIGHTING IN GUAZAPA. OUR DEFENSE ATTACHE INDICATED THAT RECENT INCREASES IN TERRORISM AND COMMON CRIME IN THE METROPOLITAN AREA SUGGEST THAT THE REBEL INFLUX IS WELL UNDERWAY.

X-- IN RELATED ACTIONS, REBELS FLEEING GUAZAPA TO CHALATENANGO, SAN VICENTE, AND USULUTAN DEPARTMENTS RAN INTO GOVERNMENT OUTPOSTS AND PATROLS BACKED BY ARTILLERY AND AIR ASSETS, ACCORDING TO REPORTING FROM [REDACTED] (b)(1) (b)(3) NatSecAct

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X-- OUR AMBASSADOR VISITED THE ARMY SITE WHERE SOME 270 CIVILIAN "MASAS" -- HALF OF THEM CHILDREN -- ARE BEING PROCESSED AND REPORTED THAT THEY WERE RECEIVING GOOD CARE. (S NF)

THERE ARE SOME SIGNS THAT THE ARMED FORCES ARE USING THE GUAZAPA OPERATION TO KICK OFF A MORE COMPREHENSIVE SERIES OF OFFENSIVES IN 1986.

X-- THE MILITARY LAUNCHED NEW "PINK TEAM" OPERATIONS AGAINST FOUR REBEL CAMPS IN CHALATENANGO DEPARTMENT LAST WEEKEND. OUR [REDACTED] REPORTED THAT BLOOD TRAILS SUGGESTED THE OPERATIONS EXACTED NUMEROUS INSURGENT CASUALTIES. IN ADDITION, A LARGE QUANTITY OF DOCUMENTS, EXPLOSIVES, AND RADIO BATTERIES WERE RECOVERED. (b)(1) (b)(3) NatSecAct

X-- THE MILITARY ALSO LAUNCHED "OPERATION CARLOS" ON 1 FEBRUARY IN NORTHERN MORAZAN DEPARTMENT. OUR [REDACTED] REPORTED THAT THIS OFFENSIVE CALLS FOR FIVE FULL INFANTRY BATTALIONS, AIRBORNE RECONNAISSANCE TEAMS, AND OTHER SUPPORT ELEMENTS. (b)(1) (b)(3) NatSecAct

X-- THE OPERATION ALSO CALLS FOR CIVIC ACTION PROGRAMS IN THE PERQUIN JURISDICTION, WHICH REBEL PROPAGANDISTS HAVE CLAIMED FOR YEARS IS A DEFACTO "LIBERATED ZONE."

X-- IN ANOTHER ACTION, TWO SMALL PATROLS FROM THE NATIONAL POLICE GARRISON AT BERLIN ENGAGED AN ESTIMATED 200-MAN GUERRILLA COLUMN IN A FIREFIGHT. THE REBELS BROKE CONTACT ON THE ARRIVAL OF A RELIEF COLUMN AND AIR FORCE GUNSHIPS, BUT SUFFERED SEVERAL CONFIRMED CASUALTIES COMPARED TO ONLY TWO WOUNDED POLICEMEN. (S NF)

[REDACTED] (b)(3) NatSecAct

CONTROVERSIAL RIGHTWING COLONEL OCHOA WAS RELIEVED OF COMMAND OF THE FOURTH BRIGADE AND REASSIGNED AS DEFENSE ATTACHE IN WASHINGTON.

X-- THIS IS OCHOA'S SECOND POSTING TO WASHINGTON IN THE LAST THREE YEARS AND FOLLOWS HIS INCREASINGLY SHARP CRITICISM OF DUARTE AND THE HIGH COMMAND. OUR [REDACTED] SAYS THAT OCHOA NOW HAS LITTLE SUPPORT IN THE MILITARY AND DOES NOT BELIEVE HIS TRANSFER WILL CAUSE PROBLEMS. (S NF) (b)(1) (b)(3) NatSecAct

GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES

REBEL ACTIVITY CONTINUED TO BE LIGHT THIS WEEK, ALTHOUGH THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT THE INSURGENTS ONCE AGAIN MAY ATTEMPT TO CAPTURE INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION AND WEAKEN U.S. RESOLVE BY CARRYING OUT A TERRORIST ACT AGAINST U.S. PERSONNEL IN EL SALVADOR.

X-- THE U.S. EMBASSY CITED CREDIBLE REPORTS THIS WEEK THAT U.S. CITIZENS ARE BEING TARGETED FOR ASSASSINATION. A FAIRLY RELIABLE SOURCE SAID AN UNNAMED U.S. CITIZEN HAS BEEN CAREFULLY FOLLOWED BY TWO TERRORIST FACTIONS IN THE CAPITAL AND WILL BE ASSASSINATED AS SOON AS THE PLAN RECEIVES FINAL APPROVAL FROM REBEL HEADQUARTERS IN MANAGUA. (b)(1) (b)(3) NatSecAct

X-- INCREASED WARNINGS FROM SALVADORAN SECURITY SERVICES, WHO ARE MONITORING URBAN TERRORIST RADIO COMMUNICATIONS, AS WELL AS OTHER [REDACTED] HAVE HEIGHTENED CONCERN. OUR [REDACTED]

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EMBASSY HAS PLACED NEW RESTRICTIONS ON THE ACTIVITIES OF ALL MISSION PERSONNEL. (S NF [redacted])

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THE INSURGENTS CALLED FOR A NEW TRANSPORTATION BAN -- THE SECOND OF THE NEW YEAR -- SUPPOSEDLY TO PROTEST PRESIDENT DUARTE'S ECONOMIC AUSTERITY MEASURES.

X-- IN ADDITION TO THE TRAVEL BAN, WHICH NORMALLY HAS THE GREATEST IMPACT IN THE EASTERN DEPARTMENTS OF CHALATENANGO, USULUTAN, AND SAN MIGUEL, THE REBELS CONTINUED THEIR SABOTAGE OF THE ELECTRICAL GRID AND AGRICULTURAL FACILITIES. MEDIA REPORTS FROM SAN SALVADOR INDICATE THAT MANY CITIES AND TOWNS, INCLUDING THE CAPITAL, HAVE SUFFERED BLACKOUTS ALMOST DAILY.

X-- THE U.S. EMBASSY REPORTED THAT THE GUERRILLAS ARE NOW MINING FIELDS UNDER HARVEST IN AN ATTEMPT TO INTIMIDATE LABORERS FROM HARVESTING COFFEE, SUGAR, AND COTTON CROPS. [redacted]

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THERE WAS NEW REPORTING TO INDICATE THAT THE REBELS ARE STRENGTHENING THEIR ORGANIZATION IN THE WESTERN PROVINCES IN ANTICIPATION OF A MAJOR CAMPAIGN OF SABOTAGE AND HARASSMENT.

X-- LEFTIST INFORMANTS OF THE SALVADORAN MILITARY INDICATED THAT FOUR DIFFERENT GUERRILLA FACTIONS ARE PLANNING TO COOPERATE IN JOINT OPERATIONS AGAINST ECONOMIC TARGETS IN THE WEST, PARTICULARLY IN SONSONATE DEPARTMENT. SOME OF THESE SOURCES SAID THEY BELIEVE THERE MAY BE AS MANY AS 500 REBEL COMBATANTS NOW DISPERSED THROUGHOUT THE THREE WESTERN DEPARTMENTS.

X-- GIVEN THE PRESSURE THE ARMED FORCES ARE PUTTING ON THE GUERRILLAS IN THE EASTERN AND CENTRAL PARTS OF THE COUNTRY, THE REBELS MAY WELL VIEW THE WEST AS A MORE IMPORTANT TARGET. FACTIONAL DISPUTES AND THE LACK OF SUPPORT AND LOGISTICAL NETWORKS, HOWEVER, HAVE ALLOWED THEM MIXED SUCCESS AT BEST IN THIS AREA IN THE PAST. MOREOVER, THE MORE PROSPEROUS AND CONSERVATIVE LOCAL POPULATION -- COUPLED WITH A TERRAIN THAT FAVORS THE ARMED FORCES -- HAS MADE THE WEST A LESS HOSPITABLE ENVIRONMENT FOR THE INSURGENCY. (S NF [redacted])

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