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F-2024-18986 F-2020-069323 B-000028 UNCLASSIFIED//CLASSIFIED 4/1/2026 3/31/2026

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MRN: [82 SAN SALVADOR 9469](#)
Date/DTG: Nov 20, 1982 / 200000Z Nov 82
From: AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE *ROUTINE*; BOGOTA, AMEMBASSY *ROUTINE*
E.O.: Unknown
TAGS: PINS, PINT, ES, (HERRERA MARTINEZ, JORGE ALBERTO),
(MENJIVAR, LUIS ANTONIO), (SARAVIA AVALOS, JULIO CESAR),
(MOLINA OSEQUEDA, CARLOS ALBERTO), (DOMENEC H,
MAURICIO)
Reference: n/a
Subject: (U) VISIT TO MARIONA PRISON

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ACTION ARA-16

INFO OCT-00 COPY-01 ADS-00 INR-10 SS-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00
H-01 IO-15 NSC-01 NSAE-00 SY-06 HA-08 L-03
PM-09 PA-01 MCT-02 USIE-00 SP-02 SR-06 SPRS-01
/092 W

-----103424 201808Z /40

R 201738Z NOV 82
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2837
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY MEXICO
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PN

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E.O. 12356: DECL: 11/19/88
TAGS: PINS, PINT, ES
SUBJECT: (U) VISIT TO MARIONA PRISON

1. (U) ON NOVEMBER 18 POLCOUNS VISITED MARIONA PRISON
WHERE HE WAS THE GUEST OF PRISON DIRECTOR ROBERTO PORTILLO
AND PENAL SYSTEM DIRECTOR MAURICIO PAREDES. AFTER EX-
PLAINING THE PURPOSE OF THE VISIT -- TO FORESTALL ANY

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POSSIBLE CRITICISM IN THE U.S. OF THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH THE SEVEN RECENTLY ARRESTED FDR MEMBERS ARE HELD -- PORTILLO BROUGHT IN THESE PRISONERS. THEY WERE:

-- DAVID ELIAS GUADRON VALENCIA

-- JORGE ALBERTO HERRERA MARTINEZ

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-- LUIS ANTONIO MENJIVAR

-- VICTOR MANUEL ZELAYA JOVEL

-- JULIO CESAR SARAVIA AVALOS

-

-- CARLOS ALBERTO MOLINA OSEQUEDA

-- MAURICIO DOMENECH

THE WOMAN CAPTURED AT THE SAME TIME IS HELD AT THE WOMEN'S PRISON AT ILOPANGO. THE VISIT TO THIS PRISON WILL BE THE SUBJECT OF A SEPTTEL.

2. (U) ALL WERE IN EXCELLENT PHYSICAL CONDITION AND GOOD SPIRITS. ONLY SARAVIA SHOWED ANY PHYSICAL PROBLEMS. HE HAS A BURN ON HIS RIGHT ELBOW AND HE SAID ON HIS RIGHT HIP AS WELL. THESE BURNS WERE THE RESULT OF BEING FORCED TO LIE OVER A HOT EXHAUST SYSTEM IN THE BED OF THE TRUCK WHICH HIS CAPTORS USED TO TAKE HIM AWAY. HE WAS TIED AND GAGGED AT THE TIME SO HE COULD NOT TELL HIS CAPTORS WHAT HIS DIFFICULTY WAS. HE SAID CLEARLY THAT THE BURNS WERE ACCIDENTAL, NOT THE RESULT OF INTENTIONAL MISTREATMENT. HE ALSO SAID THAT THE MEDICAL TREATMENT HE IS RECEIVING AT THE PRISON IS FIRST RATE.

3. (G) THEY SAID THAT THEY HAD NO INFORMATION ON THE STATUS OF THEIR CASE BEFORE THE MILITARY INVESTIGATIONS COURT. THEY POINTED OUT THAT THIS SITUATION WAS NOT UNUSUAL. MANY OF THE POLITICAL PRISONERS IN MARIONA HAD BEEN THERE OVER TWO YEARS AND STILL HAD NOT MADE ANY DECLARATION BEFORE A COURT. BOTH PAREDES AND

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PORTILLO CONFIRMED THEIR STATEMENT. THEN FOLLOWED CONGRATULATIONS FROM THE GROUP ON THE AMBASSADOR'S SPEECH BEFORE THE AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE. THEY REMARKED THAT WHAT THE AMBASSADOR HAD SAID WAS NOT ONLY TRUE,

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BUT HAD NEEDED SAYING FOR SOME TIME. AGAIN THE PRISON OFFICIALS AGREED. THEN FOLLOWED A DETAILED CRITICISM OF THE SALVADORAN CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM WITH THE PRISON OFFICIALS AND THE PRISONERS IN ESSENTIAL AGREEMENT.

4. (S) NEXT FOLLOWED A DISCUSSION OF THEIR MEMBERSHIP IN THE FDR AND WHAT IT REALLY MEANT. THEY SAID THAT THEY PROMOTED "RECONCILIATION." THEY WERE CURIOUS ABOUT WHAT THE U.S. POSITION WAS WITH REGARD TO "DIALOGUE." THE POLCOUNS REPLIED THAT THE U.S. SUPPORTS THIS GOVERNMENT WHICH HAS AS ONE ITS GOALS THE RECONCILIATION OF THE COUNTRY. THEY REMARKED THAT THEY WERE IN ESSENTIAL AGREEMENT WITH THIS POLICY, BUT THAT UNFORTUNATELY, AS IN THEIR CASE, THIS POLICY BREAKS DOWN. THEY CLAIMED THAT THE FDR WAS QUITE A DIFFERENT ORGANIZATION FROM THE FMLN. THEY RECOGNIZED THAT A SUCCESSFUL RECONCILIATION OF THE COUNTRY MIGHT WELL TAKE PLACE WITHOUT INCLUDING SOME OF THE MORE "EXTREME ELEMENTS" OF THE FMLN. THEY EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE U.S. WOULD DO ALL IN ITS POWER TO HELP BRING PEACE TO EL SALVADOR.

5. (S) THEY ALL SAID THAT DURING THEIR INTERROGATION - WHICH TOOK PLACE IN SEVERAL DIFFERENT PLACES - THAT "THERE WAS A LOT OF PRESSURE TO ADMIT" THAT THE FDR AND THE FMLN WERE ESSENTIALLY THE SAME THING. THERE WERE ALSO A LOT OF QUESTIONS ABOUT THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S. EMBASSY. THEY WERE INTERESTED IN ONE "BLOND" POLOFF IN PARTICULAR AND IN HIS "BOSS." IN FACT, WHEN THE POLCOUNS PASSED AROUND A CALLING CARD, SARAVIA SAID, "NOW I KNOW WHO YOU

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ARE. THEY KEPT ASKING ABOUT YOU."

6. (C) THE POLCOUNS EXPLAINED THAT THE PURPOSE OF HIS VISIT TO MARIONA WAS TO WITNESS THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH POLITICAL PRISONERS ARE HELD. HE WAS NOT THERE TO COMMENT ON THE JUSTICE OF THEIR ARREST. THEIR CASE HAD AROUSED A GREAT DEAL OF INTEREST IN THE U.S. AND THE EMBASSY WANTED TO BE ABLE TO COMMENT ACCURATELY ON CONDITIONS AT MARIONA. THEY REPLIED THAT THEY UNDERSTOOD THE EMBASSY'S POSITION. THEY PROMISED THAT THEY WOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO MAKE POLITICAL HAY OF THE VISIT. THEY ALSO WERE IN UNANIMOUS AGREEMENT THAT MARIONA, WHILE STILL A PRISON, WAS WELL RUN AND THAT THE CONDITIONS WERE MOST HUMANE.

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7. (U) AFTER THEY RETURNED TO THE PRISON INTERIOR, PAREDES AND PORTILLO TOOK THE POLCOUNS ON A FULL TOUR OF THE PRISON. MARIONA IS A "MEDIUM SECURITY" FACILITY. IT TURNED OUT TO BE VISITING DAY AND THE PRISON WAS FULL OF FAMILY MEMBERS OF ALL AGES. MARIONA PRESENTLY HAS 1,100 PRISONERS OF WHOM SOME 680 ARE THERE ON POLITICAL GROUNDS. THE PRISON MEDICAL STAFF IS MADE UP OF FOUR DOCTORS AND A DENTIST. THE PRISONERS RECEIVE THREE MEALS A DAY. THE GOES BUDGETS 48 CENTS PER PRISONER, PER DAY, FOR FOOD. THE DIET, WHILE NOT HUIE CUISINE, APPEARED ADEQUATE AND ABUNDANT. POTATO SALAD AND TORTILLAS WAS THE LUNCH ON THE DAY OF THE VISIT. THE PRISON ADMINISTRATION ENCOURAGES FAMILY VISITS. THERE ARE 27 PRIVATE "FAMILY" ROOMS WHERE PRISONERS ARE ALLOWED TO BE ALONE WITH THEIR WIVES. THE DORMITORIES ARE AIRY AND CLEAN. THE PRISONERS SLEEP HEAD-TO-TOE IN TEN-MAN CELLS. EACH DORMITORY HAS SEVERAL SHOWERS WHICH THE PRISONERS ARE ALLOWED TO USE EVERY DAY. THE PRISONERS ARE KEPT OUT OF THE DORMITORIES FROM 7 A.M. TO 6 P.M. DURING WHICH TIME THEY CAN WORK, STUDY AT THE PRISON SCHOOL OR

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PRACTICE THEIR HANDICRAFTS. THE PRISON HAS SHOPS FOR ARTISANS, CARPENTERS, CABINETMAKERS, TAILORS AND METAL WORKERS. THE PRISONERS ARE ALLOWED TO SELL WHAT THEY PRODUCE. IN FACT, PORTILLO IS TRYING TO ORGANIZE A SYSTEM SO THAT THE PRISONERS CAN BETTER DISTRIBUTE THEIR PRODUCTS IN THE COUNTRY. PRISON GUARDS, WHILE VISIBLE AND ARMED, SEEMED TO GET ALONG VERY WELL WITH THEIR CHARGES. OF THE PRISONS THE POLCOUNS HAS VISITED IN SIX COUNTRIES, INCLUDING THE U.S., MARIONA WAS BY FAR THE BEST HE HAS SEEN. IT WAS CLEAN AND OPEN. THE PRISONERS HAD THINGS THEY COULD DO TO KEEP THEMSELVES OCCUPIED. THE TREATMENT IS HUMANE IN EVERY WAY.

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8. (S) COMMENT: DOMENECH IS CLEARLY THE LEADER OF THE SEVEN FDR PRISONERS. HE DID MOST OF THE TALKING, ALTHOUGH CARLOS MOLINA ALSO MADE CONTRIBUTIONS. THEY ARE VERY AWARE OF INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION FOCUSED ON THEM. THEY ARE FULLY RESOLVED IN THE JUSTICE OF THEIR CAUSE. MORE THAN ONE OF THEM EXPRESSED THE IDEA THAT THEY WERE "BEARING WITNESS" FOR THE TROUBLES BESETTING THEIR COUNTRY. THE IMPRESSION WAS THAT THEIR EXPERIENCE HAD ONLY CONFIRMED THEM IN THEIR THINKING. THEY CERTAINLY REPENTED NOTHING.
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