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E.O. 12356: N/A
TAGS: PHUM, ES
SUBJECT: CONGRESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE RE: ARCATAO

THE HONORABLE MIKE LOWRY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Oscar Olson, Senior Reviewer

DEAR MR. LOWRY:

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INQUIRY ABOUT THE MILITARY OPERATION
IN ARCATAO, CHALATENANGO DEPARTMENT, IN EL SALVADOR.
OUR INFORMATION IS AS FOLLOWS.

ARCATAO IS A VILLAGE OF ABOUT 300 INHABITANTS IN
NORTHEASTERN CHALATENANGO, A FEW MILES FROM THE HONDURAN
BORDER. THE AREA IS HEAVILY INFESTED WITH
SELF-PROCLAIMED MARXIST-LENINIST GUERRILLAS WHO ARE
TRYING TO OVERTHROW THE POPULARLY ELECTED GOVERNMENT OF
EL SALVADOR BY FORCE OF ARMS. THEY HAVE LONG CONSIDERED
THE AREA TO BE THEIRS TO CONTROL, AND HAVE USED BOTH IT
AND ITS INHABITANTS FOR SUPPLIES, PORTERS, COURIERS, AND
TO ESTABLISH A SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE, INCLUDING
UNDERGROUND MEDICAL FACILITIES TO TREAT GUERRILLA
WOUNDED, BURY ARMS CACHES, AND OPERATE CLANDESTINE RADIO
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FACILITIES.

UNTIL RECENTLY, THE SALVADORAN GOVERNMENT FOCUSED MOST
OF ITS ATTENTION IN OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. NOW,
HOWEVER, AS DEMOCRACY RE-ESTABLISHES ITSELF, THE
SALVADORAN GOVERNMENT IS TURNING TO THE AREAS THE
GUERRILLAS HAVE CONSIDERED THEIR OWN, AND IS IN THE
PROCESS OF ELIMINATING THE GUERRILLA PRESENCE SO THAT
PEOPLE CAN RESUME THEIR ACTIVITIES IN PEACE AND SECURITY.

THE SALVADORAN ARMED FORCES CONDUCTED A ONE-DAY MILITARY OPERATION IN AND AROUND ARCATAO ON APRIL 8 AS PART OF A LARGER COUNTER-INSURGENCY SWEEP. IN ACCORDANCE WITH PRESIDENT DUARTE'S RULES OF ENGAGEMENT, GROUND TROOPS AND AIR SUPPORT TOOK EXTREME CARE TO AVOID HARMING CIVILIANS, AND WE HAVE RECEIVED NO CREDIBLE REPORTS OF CIVILIAN CASUALTIES. THE VILLAGE WAS NOT BOMBED, AND THE SALVADORAN AIR FORCE HAS NO INTENTION OF BOMBING IT. CONTRARY TO ONE RUMOR BEING SPREAD BY THE GUERRILLAS, NEITHER CHALATENANGO DEPARTMENT MILITARY COMMANDER COL. JESUS CACERES NOR HIS MEN ORDERED THE CIVILIANS TO ABANDON THE TOWN.

I HOPE THIS INFORMATION IS HELPFUL TO YOU.

SINCERELY,

EDWIN G. CORR
AMBASSADOR

CORR

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