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 SUBJECT: NICARAGUA/EL SALVADOR TACTICAL UPDATE, 14-20 MAR 85

1. FOLLOWING, BETWEEN TEAR LINES, IS THE NICARAGUA AND EL SALVADOR TACTICAL UPDATE FOR THE PERIOD 14 - 20 MARCH 1985. IT MAY BE SHARED WITH APPROPRIATELY-CLEARED EMBASSY OFFICERS ON A BACKGROUND USE ONLY BASIS. IT DRAWS ON [redacted]

[redacted] BUT IS NOT COORDINATED WITHIN THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY AND THEREFORE IS NOT FINISHED INTELLIGENCE PER SE.

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NICARAGUA AND EL SALVADOR TACTICAL UPDATE
 WEEK OF 14 - 20 MARCH 1985

OVERVIEW

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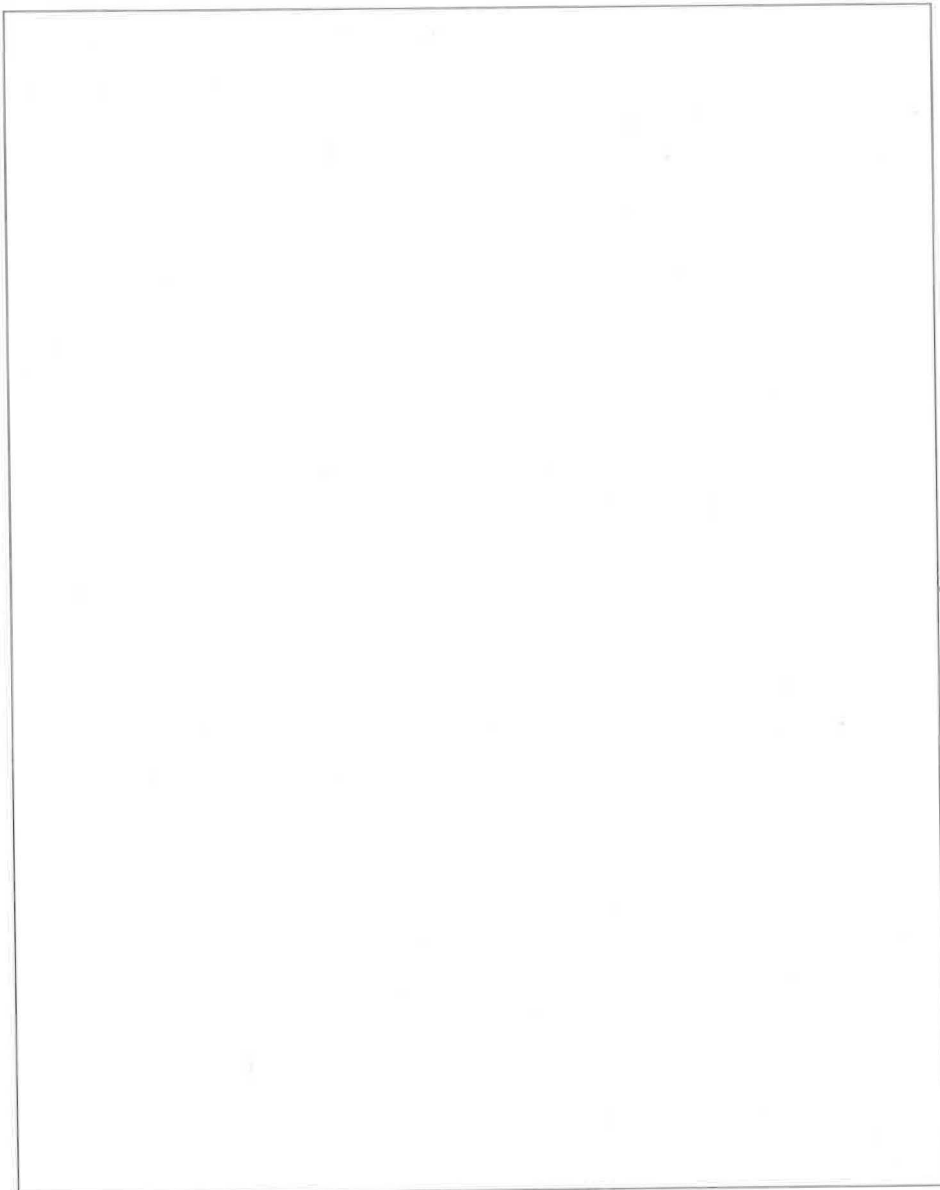
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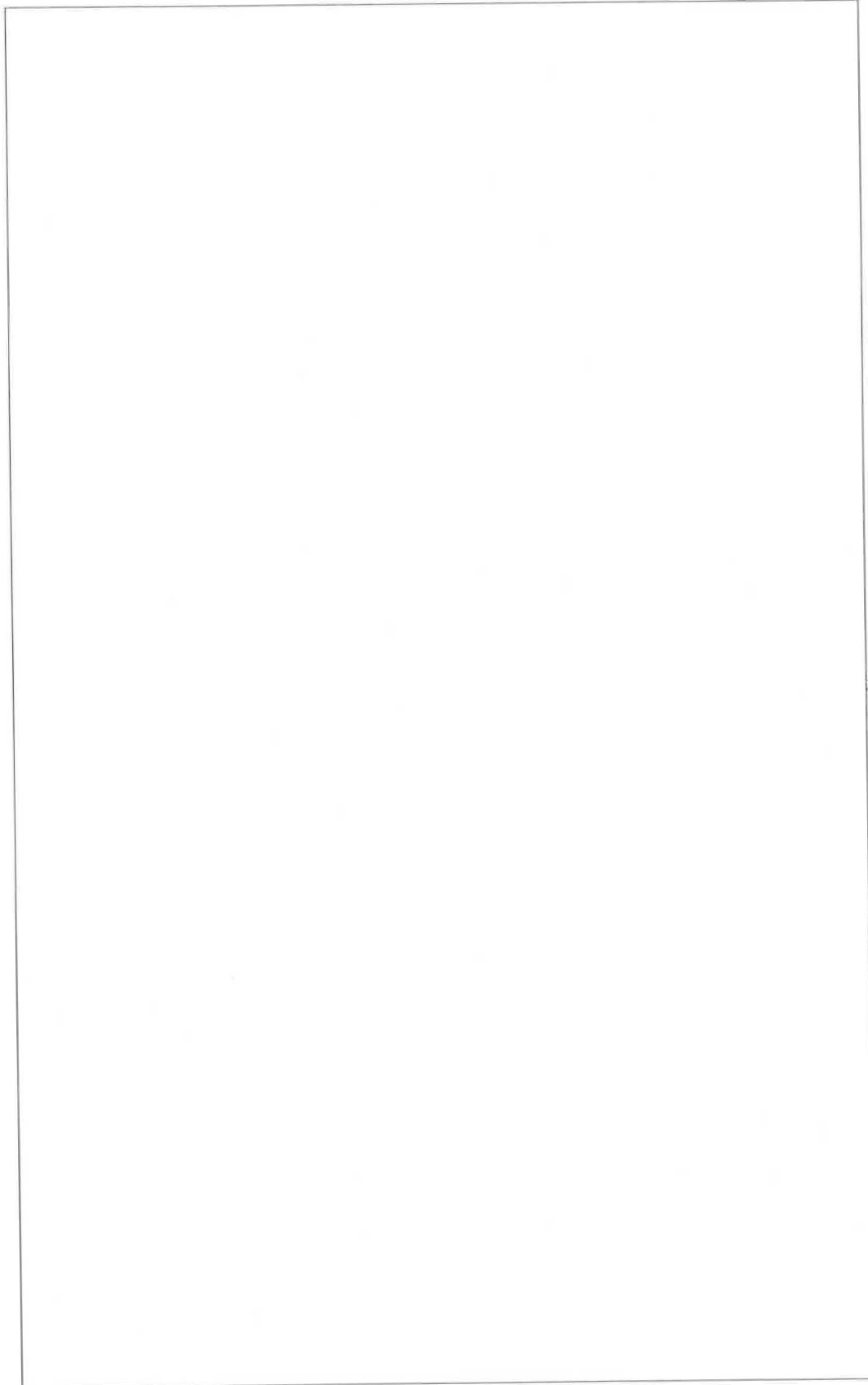
EL SALVADOR

THE ARMY IS ATTEMPTING TO MAKE MAXIMUM PROPAGANDA USE OF ITS RECENT DISCOVERY OF A SIGNIFICANT GUERRILLA ARMS CACHE, AND THERE ARE CONTINUING SIGNS OF GROWING COOPERATION WITH THE HONDURAN MILITARY. FOR THEIR PART, THE INSURGENTS' UNSUCCESSFUL ATTACK ON A MICROWAVE STATION ONLY SIX MILES FROM THE CAPITAL APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN PART OF THEIR EFFORT TO INTENSIFY HIGH PROFILE ACTIVITY PRIOR TO THE 31 MARCH ELECTION. REPORTING SUGGESTS ONE INSTANCE OF A POSSIBLE RESUPPLY EFFORT.
(S NF)



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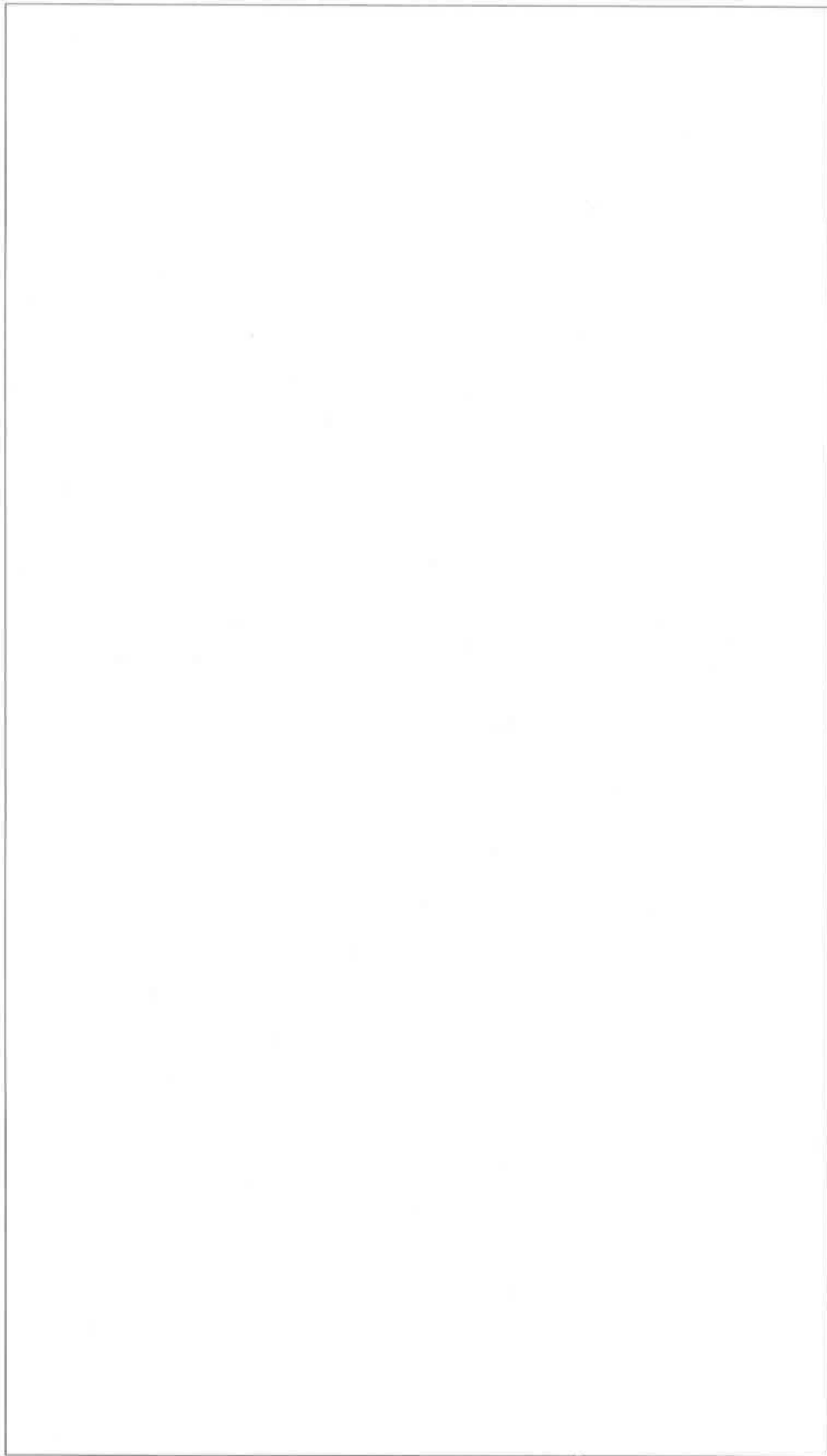
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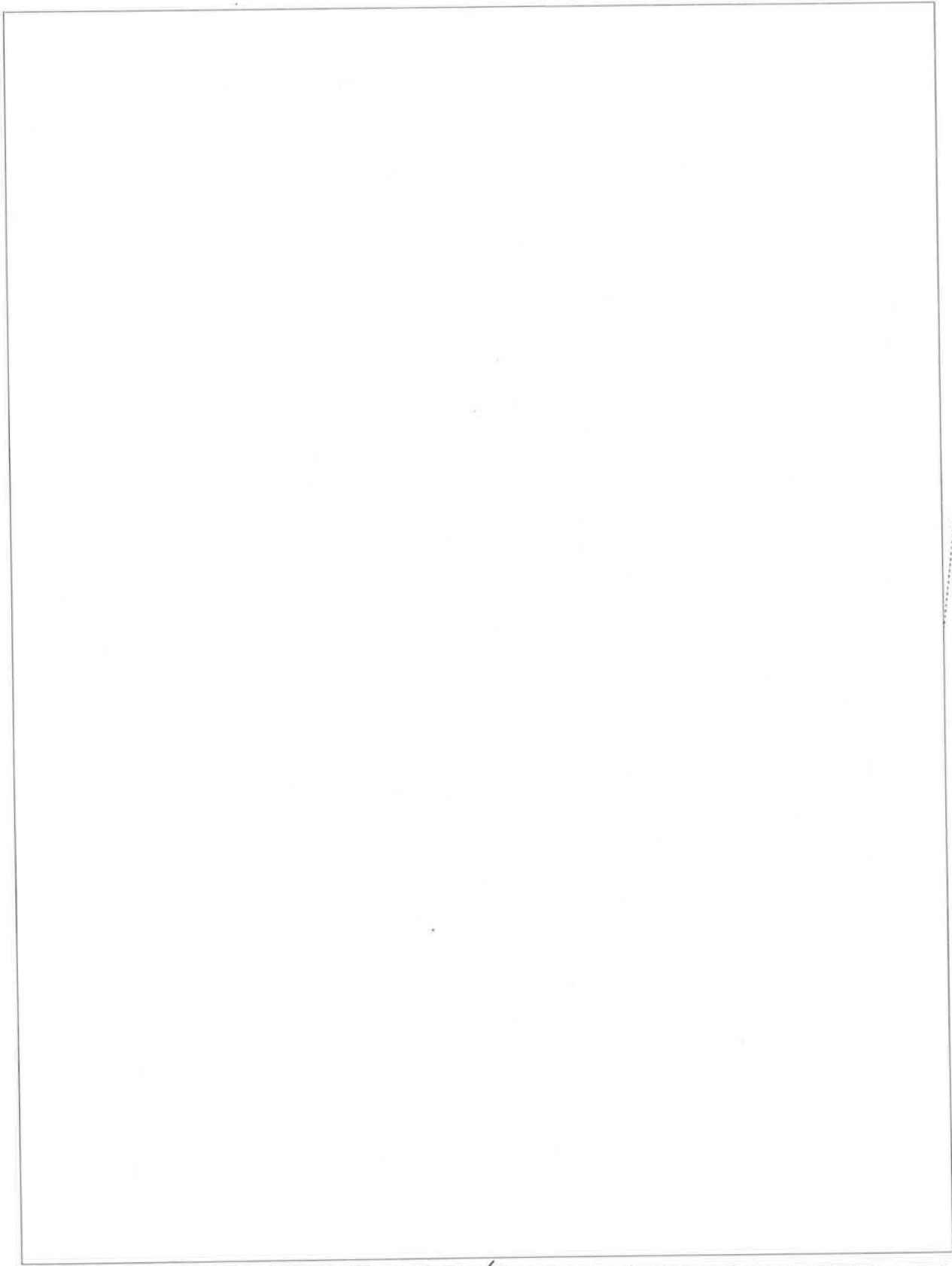
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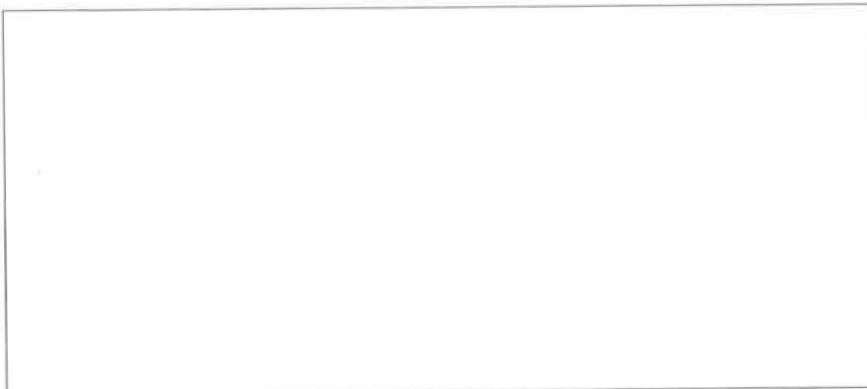
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EL SALVADOR DEVELOPMENTS

GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY

ON 15 MARCH, AN ARMY BATTALION IN CABANAS DEPARTMENT UNCOVERED THE LARGEST GUERRILLA SUPPLY CACHE SINCE THE INSURGENCY BEGAN.

[REDACTED] REPORTS THAT OVER 170 WEAPONS--INCLUDING SOVIET TYPE GRENADES--WERE FOUND WITH OTHER MILITARY SUPPLIES.

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--THE ARMY IS SEARCHING THE SAME AREA FOR MORE CACHES, BASED ON INFORMATION PROVIDED BY A GUERRILLA DEFECTOR.
(S NF)

THE ELITE ATONAL BATTALION IS CONTINUING TO PROTECT THE COFFEE-PRODUCING REGION OF USULUTAN DEPARTMENT.

[REDACTED] REVEALS GUERRILLA UNITS REPORTING RECENT CONTACT WITH THE BATTALION--SUPPORTED BY HEAVY ARTILLERY AND AIRCRAFT--IN THE AREAS OF SAN MARCOS, BERLIN, AND SAN AUGUSTIN. (S S NF [REDACTED])

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THE SALVADORAN AND HONDURAN ARMED FORCES BEGAN COORDINATED OPERATIONS IN THE DISPUTED BORDER AREAS LAST WEEK.

--ACCORDING TO THE [REDACTED] IN TEGUCIGALPA, FIVE HONDURAN COMPANIES ESTABLISHED BLOCKING POSITIONS IN COORDINATION WITH SALVADORAN UNITS FROM COLONEL OCHOA'S 4TH BRIGADE, WHICH SWEEPED THE BORDER AREA.

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--THE TWO FORCES MAINTAINED COMMUNICATIONS BUT DID NOT CROSS THE BORDER OR OPEN FIRE.

--CONTINUED IMPROVED RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SALVADORAN AND HONDURAN ARMED FORCES COULD HELP DENY THE GUERRILLAS THEIR TRADITIONAL AREAS OF SANCTUARY ALONG THE BORDER.
(C NF)

THE ARMY RECALLED ITS LONG-RANGE RECONNAISSANCE PATROL RECENTLY INSERTED IN NORTHERN MORAZAN.

--THE PATROL WAS DISCOVERED BY GUERRILLAS, ACCORDING TO

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A RELIABLE SOURCE, THREE DAYS AFTER IT BEGAN OPERATIONS.
IT IS NOW BACK AT ILOPANGO AIR BASE. (S NF NC OC)

THE [REDACTED] REPORTED THAT A UH-1H HUEY
HELICOPTER CRASHED ON 18 MARCH BECAUSE OF MECHANICAL FAILURE,
KILLING ONE SOLDIER AND INJURING TWO OTHERS.

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--THIS IS THE THIRD CONFIRMED HELICOPTER CRASH IN THE
LAST MONTH. THERE HAS BEEN UNSUBSTANTIATED [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] SINCE FEBRUARY INDICATING THAT THREE OTHER
HELICOPTERS HAVE CRASHED. THIS WOULD REDUCE THE
HELICOPTER INVENTORY OF THE AIR FORCE TO ABOUT 35.
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GUERRILLA ACTIVITY

AN ESTIMATED 300-400 INSURGENTS ATTACKED A SIGNAL RELAY
STATION NEAR THE CAPITAL ON 16 MARCH BUT FAILED TO CAUSE
SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE BEFORE BEING REPELLED BY 52 NATIONAL GUARD
DEFENDERS BACKED BY AIR POWER.

--THE [REDACTED] AND AN [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] INDICATE THAT THE REBELS BROKE OFF THEIR ASSAULT
AFTER ONE HOUR WHEN THEY CAME UNDER FIRE FROM AIR FORCE
HELICOPTERS AND AN AC-47 GUNSHIP.

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--THE MILITARY REACTION KEPT GOVERNMENT CASUALTIES AND
DAMAGE TO THE FACILITY MINIMAL, BUT CHIEF OF STAFF
BLANDON IS RELIABLY REPORTED TO BE DISSATISFIED.
BLANDON'S REACTION MAY REFLECT DELAYS IN DEPLOYING THE
ELITE AIRBORNE BATTALION, WHICH DID NOT BEGIN ITS
ASSAULT ON THE AREA UNTIL FIVE HOURS AFTER THE REBELS
INITIATED FIRE. (S NF NC OC)

AN [REDACTED] NOTES THAT THE GUERRILLAS
WERE CONCENTRATING FORCES IN LA UNION DEPARTMENT EARLIER THIS
MONTH.

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--THE CONCENTRATIONS APPARENTLY ABOUT AREAS OF MORAZAN
DEPARTMENT AND MAY REFLECT A REBEL EFFORT TO RELIEVE
PRESSURE THERE CAUSED BY ONGOING LARGE ARMY SWEEPS.
(S NF NC OC)

ELSEWHERE, THE INSURGENTS APPEAR TO BE CARRYING OUT SMALL-
SCALE ACTIONS DESIGNED TO GIVE THEM MAXIMUM EXPOSURE PRIOR TO
THE 31 MARCH ELECTIONS.

--ACCORDING TO THE U.S. EMBASSY, THE GUERRILLAS HAVE
BURNED SEVEN CITY HALLS IN FIVE DEPARTMENTS SO FAR THIS
MONTH.

--ON 16 AND 17 MARCH, ACCORDING TO [REDACTED]
GUERRILLA UNITS CONDUCTED HARASSMENT ATTACKS ON
GOVERNMENT POSITIONS IN SAN SALVADOR AND SAN MIGUEL
DEPARTMENTS.

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--ACCORDING TO [REDACTED] THE GUERRILLAS
ALSO MAINTAINED THEIR EMPHASIS ON ECONOMIC WARFARE BY
DESTROYING 700 TONS OF COFFEE AT A GOVERNMENT-OWNED
COFFEE PLANT IN SAN VICENTE DEPARTMENT ON 14 MARCH.

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--THE INSURGENTS ALSO TARGETED THE COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK IN USULUTAN, MORAZAN, AND LA UNION DEPARTMENTS EARLIER IN THE MONTH, AND CONTINUED HIGHWAY INTERDICTION IN SAN VICENTE AND SAN SALVADOR DEPARTMENTS.

(S S NF [redacted])

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NICARAGUAN AND OTHER INVOLVEMENT

A LOGISTICS-RELATED INCIDENT SUGGESTS SOME RECENT RESUPPLY ACTIVITY.

--THE [redacted] REPORTS THAT THE ELITE BELLOSO BATTALION WAS ORDERED TO THE JUCUARAN AREA--A MAJOR RESUPPLY CORRIDOR--AFTER A LARGE GUERRILLA PRESENCE WAS DETECTED THERE, INDICATING THAT A SUPPLY EFFORT MIGHT BE UNDERWAY.

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