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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9726
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY MEXICO
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
ALL AMCONSULS CANADA POUCH

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 OTTAWA 00403

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REVIEW AUTHORITY: Oscar Olson, Senior
Reviewer

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: SREF, CA, HO, ES, NU, XK
SUBJECT: REFUGEES -- EMPLOYMENT AND IMMIGRATION
- MINISTER AXWORTHY'S TRIP TO CENTRAL AMERICA

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- (C) 82 OTTAWA 8860, (D) TEGUCIGALPA 0112 (NOTAL)

1. (C - ENTIRE TEXT.)

2. SUMMARY: EMPLOYMENT AND IMMIGRATION MINISTER
AXWORTHY'S SWING THROUGH SEVERAL CENTRAL AMERICAN NATIONS
WILL RESULT IN INCREASED NUMBERS OF REFUGEES RESETTLED
IN CANADA FROM THE REGION IN AN EFFORT TO FILL THE 2,000
SLOTS ALLOCATED IN THE 1983 REFUGEE PLAN FOR ALL OF LATIN
AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN. ALTHOUGH REPATRIATION OR
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LOCAL RESETTLEMENT ARE CONSIDERED PREFERABLE IN MOST
INSTANCES, THE GOC BELIEVES A SIGNIFICANT MINORITY FACE
THREAT OF PERSECUTION WARRANTING RESETTLEMENT IN CANADA.
DURING HIS TRIP, AXWORTHY PUBLICLY CRITICIZED THE U. S.
FOR A LACK OF LEADERSHIP AND COOPERATION REGARDING THE
CENTRAL AMERICAN REFUGEE PROBLEM AND ALSO CHARGED THE
HONDURAN MILITARY WITH MISTREATING REFUGEES IN THE CAMPS
THERE. WITHOUT BEING SPECIFIC, HE INTIMATED A GREATER
CANADIAN INVOLVEMENT IN CENTRAL AMERICA, POSSIBLY VIA AID,
JOB TRAINING, MORE OFFICIALS FOR REFUGEE PROCESSING AND

THE LIKE. GIVEN CANADA'S ECONOMIC RECESSION, THIS INVOLVEMENT MAY PROVE MORE RHETORICAL THAN REAL BUT, COUPLED WITH AXWORTHY'S PRONOUNCEMENTS ON U.S. PERFORMANCE, IT ADDS TO THE ARGUMENTS FOR RAISING THE MATTER DURING HIS MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR DOUGLAS (NOW PROPOSED AS EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS FOR JANUARY 31 IN WASHINGTON). ACTION REQUESTED: SEE PARA 10. END SUMMARY.

3. EMPLOYMENT AND IMMIGRATION MINISTER AXWORTHY RETURNED TO CANADA JANUARY 8 AFTER A 10-DAY VISIT TO THREE CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES AND MEXICO TO ASSESS THE REFUGEE PROBLEM. AFTER VACATIONING IN COSTA RICA, AXWORTHY STOPPED IN EL SALVADOR AND HONDURAS BEFORE HEADING TO MEXICO CITY FOR A MEETING OF CANADIAN REFUGEE OFFICIALS. HE TOURED THE MESA GRANDE REFUGEE CAMP IN HONDURAS, AMONG OTHERS, AND, ACCORDING TO EXTAFF WESTERN HEMISPHERE REFUGEE DIRECTOR PARDY, WHO BRIEFED EMBOFF, WAS IMPRESSED WITH THE CONDITIONS AND ADMINISTRATION HE FOUND. SOMEWHAT CONTRADICTORILY, AXWORTHY IN A PRESS CONFERENCE EXPRESSED SURPRISE AT WHAT HE CONSIDERED THE HEAVY MILITARY PRESENCE AROUND THE CAMPS AND CHARGED THE HONDURAN MILITARY WITH REGULARLY MISTREATING SALVADORAN REFUGEES. NOTING THAT CENTRAL AMERICA WAS "AN AREA OF

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INCREASING INTEREST, CONCERN AND PRIORITY FOR CANADA," AXWORTHY CONCLUDED THAT THE GOC HAD "A VERY SPECIAL ROLE TO PLAY IN THIS REGION." CAREFUL TO AVOID FIRM COMMITMENTS, HE SUGGESTED THAT AID PROGRAMS BENEFITTING BOTH REFUGEES AND THE LOCAL POPULATION MIGHT BE DEVELOPED AS A MEANS TO CALM RESENTMENT AGAINST THE REFUGEES. A SPECIAL PROGRAM FOR EL SALVADOR'S WAR ORPHANS UNDER WHICH THEY WOULD COME TO CANADA FOR JOB TRAINING, RETURNING TO EL SALVADOR ONLY IF THEY CHOOSE, MAY ALSO BE CONSIDERED, HE SAID.

4. AT THE SAME PRESS CONFERENCE IN MEXICO CITY, WHICH GAINED SOME ATTENTION IN CANADA, AXWORTHY CRITICIZED THE U. S. FOR WHAT HE TERMED A LACK OF LEADERSHIP AND COOPERATION IN DEALING WITH THE PLIGHT OF CENTRAL AMERICAN REFUGEES. WHEN ASKED FOR A CLARIFICATION OF AXWORTHY'S REMARKS, PARDY SAID THEY WERE "RELATIVELY STRAIGHTFORWARD." WHILE THE U. S. HAD TAKEN THE LEAD AND VIRTUALLY ORGANIZED THE WORLDWIDE REFUGEE EFFORT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, TOKEN ATTEMPTS OR LESS WERE MADE IN CENTRAL AMERICA, AN AREA THE GOC CONSIDERED WORTHY OF GREATER ATTENTION. THE DEPORTATION OF CERTAIN EL SALVADORANS FROM THE U. S. CHARACTERIZED THE U. S. APPROACH, PARDY SAID, WHILE CANADA HAD STEPPED IN TO OFFER THEM REFUGEE STATUS AND SANCTUARY. CANADIAN POLICY, HE SAID, WAS NOT TO DEPORT EL SALVADORANS SINCE MOST FACED A REAL THREAT OF PERSECUTION. EMBOFF EXPRESSED SURPRISE AND CONCERN WITH

THIS EVALUATION OF U. S. POLICY AND PARTICULARLY WITH THE METHOD AXWORTHY CHOSE TO EXPRESS HIS VIEWS. WHEN REMINDED THAT UNHCR POLICY FAVORED REPATRIATION OR LOCAL RESETTLEMENT, PARDY SAID THE GOC AGREED BUT ALSO HELD THE VIEW THAT THESE OPTIONS WERE NOT SUITABLE FOR CERTAIN

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REFUGEES WHO FACED THREATS FOR POLITICAL REASONS. ASKED FOR SPECIFICS, HE MENTIONED YOUNG MEN OF DRAFT AGE AND FORMER LABOR ACTIVISTS AS EXAMPLES.

5. ACCORDING TO PARDY, CANADA MAY BRING OVER 700 REFUGEES FROM ALL OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN IN 1982, A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE FROM THE 137 LANDED IN 1981. IN BOTH YEARS, CANADA'S ALLOCATION FOR THE REGION WAS 1,000. IN 1983, THE ALLOCATION DOUBLED TO 2,000, WHICH AXWORTHY DURING HIS TRIP REFERRED TO AS A "TARGET" RATHER THAN A "QUOTA." REF A CONTAINS DETAILS ON CANADA'S CONFIDENTIAL

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1983 REFUGEE PLAN. (INITIAL PRESS REPORTS SUGGESTING 2,000 REFUGEES WOULD BE RESETTLED FROM HONDURAS ALONE WERE LATER CLARIFIED TO INDICATE THE NUMBER WAS THE TOTAL ALLOCATED TO THE HEMISPHERE. SEE PARA 4, REF B.) AS A RESULT OF AXWORTHY'S TRIP, EVEN MORE EMPHASIS WILL BE PLACED ON INCREASING THE NUMBERS OF REFUGEES FROM CENTRAL AMERICA LANDING IN CANADA. PARDY WAS OF THE VIEW THAT THE 2,000 TARGET FOR 1983 WOULD BE 'PRETTY NEARLY' REACHED FOR THE HEMISPHERE, LARGELY BECAUSE OF A GREATER CENTRAL AMERICAN REFUGEE COMPONENT. HE EXPECTED SOME 400 OF THAT NUMBER WOULD BE LATIN AND CARIBBEAN REFUGEES IN THE U. S., SOMETIMES IDENTIFIED WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF INS AND PROCESSED BY CANADIAN OFFICIALS IN DALLAS, LOS ANGELES, SAN FRANCISCO AND OTHER U. S. CITIES. APPARENTLY REFLECTING AXWORTHY'S CONCERN, THE EMPHASIS WILL BE ON EL SALVADORANS ALTHOUGH PARDY NOTED A GROWING NUMBER OF MIDDLE-CLASS NICARAGUANS WHO WERE "GIVING UP" AND LEAVING THAT COUNTRY.

6. AXWORTHY IS UNLIKELY TO RECOMMEND THAT THE CABINET DESIGNATE SPECIAL CLASSES OF REFUGEES (SEE PARA 6, REF B) IN AN EFFORT TO WIDEN THE POOL OF THOSE ELIGIBLE FOR REFUGEE STATUS. SUCH A MOVE WOULD CAUSE DIFFICULTIES WITH THE UNHCR AND CONFLICT WITH THE PRIMARY SOLUTIONS OF REPATRIATION OR LOCAL RESETTLEMENT WITH WHICH, PARDY EMPHASIZED, THE GOC BASICALLY AGREES. AT THE MOMENT IT IS UNCLEAR EXACTLY WHAT STEPS, IF ANY, THE GOC WILL TAKE TO INCREASE REFUGEE OFFTAKE BUT PARDY MENTIONED POSSIBLY AUGMENTING THE NUMBER OF GOC REFUGEE PROCESSING OFFICIALS ORGANIZATIONS IN THE REGION WHO PRE-SCREEN AND HANDLE THE INITIAL PAPERWORK.

7. IN A SEPARATE CONVERSATION JANUARY 18, EXTAFF CENTRAL CONFIDENTIAL

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AMERICAN OFFICER DIRECTOR TOLD EMBOFF THAT BUDGETARY CONSTRAINTS RULE OUT OPENING NEW POSTS IN THE REGION. CANADA HAS EMBASSIES IN SAN JOSE AND GUATEMALA WHICH COVER OTHER COUNTRIES. HOWEVER, THIS OFFICIAL SAID CONSIDERATION

IS BEING GIVEN TO PLACING IMMIGRATION OFFICERS AT THESE TWO POSTS, IN ADDITION TO THE CURRENT THREE IN MEXICO. ANOTHER MOVE LIKELY WILL BE INCREASING HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES THROUGH TRADITIONAL INTERNATIONAL CHANNELS AS THE RED CROSS. THE EXSTAFF OFFICE DIRECTOR REGARDED THE CHIEF POSITIVE RESULTS OF THE VISIT AS: (A) MINISTER GAINING A DRAMATIC APPRECIATION OF THE REALITIES OF THE CENTRAL AMERICAN REFUGEE SITUATION, I.E., THERE IS NO LARGE GROUP OF WELL-QUALIFIED REFUGEES ANXIOUS TO RELOCATE IN CANADA; AND (B) DOMESTIC REACTION HERE HAS BEEN POSITIVE TO A CABINET MINISTER VISITING THE REGION WITH HUMANITARIAN OBJECTIVES.

8. COMMENT: AXWORTHY'S RATHER GRATUITOUS COMMENTS CONCERNING U. S. REFUGEE EFFORTS IN CENTRAL AMERICA APPEAR MOTIVATED AT LEAST IN PART BY A DESIRE TO POLISH HIS CREDENTIALS WITH CERTAIN ELEMENTS OF HIS LIBERAL PARTY AND WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS PRESSURING FOR MORE ACTIVISM IN REFUGEE MATTERS AND IN CENTRAL AMERICA. WHILE IT HAS BEEN APPARENT FOR QUITE SOME TIME THAT THE GOC WAS PAYING INCREASING ATTENTION TO CENTRAL AMERICAN AFFAIRS IN GENERAL AND REFUGEES IN PARTICULAR, AXWORTHY'S VIEWS REGARDING THE U. S. REFUGEE PERFORMANCE ARE SOMETHING OF A SURPRISE. HIS REMARKS, HOWEVER, WERE CLEARLY DIRECTED (AND CORRECTLY REPORTED BY THE PRESS) TO U. S. REFUGEE EFFORTS IN THE REGION AND DO NOT APPEAR TO BE A EUPHEMISTIC CRITIQUE OF OTHER ASPECTS OF U. S. POLICY. INDEED, IN THE FACE OF RATHER ONE-SIDED AND UNFAVORABLE MEDIA TREATMENT OF THE U.S. ROLE IN CENTRAL

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AMERICA, THE GOC'S APPROACH TO DATE HAS BEEN RELATIVELY CIRCUMSPECT AND BALANCED AS EXEMPLIFIED BY THE CAUTIOUS HANDLING OF A DECEMBER 1982 PARLIAMENTARY RECOMMENDATION FOR CANADA TO JOIN THE OAS, A PROPOSAL WHICH APPEARS TO BE QUIETLY BURIED FOR THE MOMENT (REF C). (THE NATIONALLY DISTRIBUTED GLOBE AND MAIL NEWSPAPER EXTRAPOLATED AXWORTHY'S COMMENTS IN A JANUARY 17 EDITORIAL, SAYING REFUGEES IN THE CAMPS LACKED "ADEQUATE FOOD, WATER AND MEDICINE," AND THAT "MANY OF THE REFUGEES HAVE BEEN KILLED BY THE HONDURAN SOLDIERS WHO SUPPOSEDLY GUARD THEM." THE EDITORIAL CITED WHAT IT TERMED A "U. S. LACK OF CONFIDENTIAL

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CONCERN" AND UNWILLINGNESS TO PRESS THE HONDURAN GOVERNMENT BECAUSE THE U. S. WAS "EAGER FOR THE USE OF HONDURAS AS A LAUNCHING PAD FOR COVERT OPERATIONS AGAINST NEIGHBORING NICARAGUA." IN ADDITION TO CALLING ON THE GOC TO "INFLUENCE" THE U. S. THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS, THE ARTICLE URGED THAT THE UNHCR BE PRESSED TO EXPAND ITS PRESENCE IN HONDURAS.)

9. AXWORTHY THUS MAY HAVE STRUCK OUT SOMEWHAT ON HIS OWN WITH HIS REMARKS BUT, IN ANY CASE, HIS OPPORTUNISM SHOULD NOT BE ENTIRELY COST-FREE. PARDY INFORMS US THAT AMBASSADOR DOUGLAS HAS PROPOSED A JANUARY 31 MEETING IN WASHINGTON WITH AXWORTHY WHICH WILL PROVIDE A TIMELY OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT U. S. VIEWS. END COMMENT.

10. ACTION REQUESTED: DEPARTMENT'S ASSESSMENT OF REFUGEE SITUATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA WHICH EMBASSY MAY DRAW UPON IN CONTACTS WITH CANADIAN OFFICIALS. EMBASSY FINDS REPORTS SUCH AS REF D PARTICULARLY USEFUL AND WOULD APPRECIATE BEING INCLUDED AS INFO ADDRESSEE ON ALL SUCH

MESSAGES.
ROBINSON

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