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~~(S//NC/GIA-IUO/OC/NF)~~ **SUBJ: VIEWS OF CHIEF OF JOINT GENERAL STAFF, GENERAL ADOLFO ONECIFERO BLANDON, IN RETROSPECT ON RUMORS OF A COUP D'ETAT OVER THE HOLIDAY PERIOD**

Central Intelligence Agency
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COUNTRY: EL SALVADOR

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TEXT: 1. CHIEF OF THE JOINT GENERAL STAFF, ADOLFO ONECIFERO ((BLANDON)), STATED THAT IN RETROSPECT HE CONSIDERS RUMORS OF A COUP D'ETAT WHICH CIRCULATED IN SAN SALVADOR OVER THE DECEMBER HOLIDAY PERIOD AS HAVING BEEN EXAGGERATED. HE SAID HE WAS NOT PERSONALLY HEAVILY INVOLVED IN TRACKING THESE RUMORS BECAUSE OF HIS OVERRIDING CONCERN WITH THE WAR AGAINST THE GUERRILLAS. BLANDON RECOUNTED HIS PERCEPTION OF THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS AS FOLLOWS: APPROXIMATELY ONE WEEK BEFORE CHRISTMAS, HE BECAME AWARE OF INDICATIONS OF DISCONTENT WITHIN MILITARY OFFICER RANKS, LARGELY BASED ON PRESIDENT JOSE NAPOLEON ((DUARTE))'S VETOING OF SEVERAL ITEMS OF LEGISLATION INCLUDING THE ELECTORAL LAW. ABOUT THIS TIME, CONRADO ((LOPEZ)) ANDREU, THE PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY, VISITED BLANDON. BLANDON SAID HE DETECTED THAT ANDREU WAS TRYING TO

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FEELE HIM OUT REGARDING HIS POSSIBLE UNHAPPINESS WITH PRESIDENT DUARTE, ALTHOUGH ANDREU MADE NO SPECIFIC OFFERS OR PROPOSALS REGARDING A COUP D'ETAT. BLANDON ADDED THAT HE FELT AS THOUGH HE MAY HAVE DISSUADED ANDREU OF ANY SUCH THINKING BY SHOWING THAT HE, BLANDON, WAS SUPPORTIVE OF THE PRESIDENT.

2. BLANDON SAID HE LEFT WORK ON CHRISTMAS EVE CONFIDENT THAT COUP RUMORS WERE THOSE THAT TYPICALLY CIRCULATE DURING THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY PARTY SEASON. BLANDON NOTED THAT THESE RUMBLINGS SUBSIDED AFTER CHRISTMAS BUT RESTARTED JUST BEFORE THE NEW YEAR OVER THE ISSUE OF THE PRESIDENT'S SEEKING THE PROMOTION OF THE VICE MINISTER OF DEFENSE, COLONEL REYNALDO ((LOPEZ)) NUILA, TO GENERAL. BLANDON SAID THESE RUMORS SUBSIDED WHEN PRESIDENT DUARTE, AFTER CONSULTING WITH A MEMBER OF HIGH-LEVEL MILITARY OFFICERS, BACKED OFF ON HIS PLANS TO HAVE LOPEZ NUILA'S PROMOTED. AS OFFICERS RETURNED TO FULL-TIME WORK SCHEDULES AFTER THE HOLIDAYS, THESE RUMORS HAVE FALLEN OFF EVEN MORE.

3. BLANDON EXPECTS THAT AS LONG AS THE OPPOSITION PARTIES MAINTAIN A MAJORITY IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY THESE FRICTIONS, AS IN THE CURRENT DIFFERENCES OVER THE ELECTORAL LAW, WILL CONTINUE. HE SAID THAT IN THE CASE OF THE ELECTORAL LAW, THE SUPREME COURT WILL RESOLVE THE ISSUE. BLANDON EMPHASIZED THAT ANTAGONISM BETWEEN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AND THE DUARTE ADMINISTRATION WILL CONTINUE AFTER THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS OF MARCH 1985 BECAUSE THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PDC) IS UNLIKELY TO ACHIEVE A MAJORITY AS A RESULT OF THE ELECTIONS.

4. BLAN DON BELIEVES THAT THE MAJORITY OF MILITARY OFFICERS SUPPORT THE CURRENT MODEL OF GOVERNMENT AS WELL AS PRESIDENT DUARTE. BLANDON SAID THAT HE HAS SPENT MANY HOURS DISCUSSING THIS SITUATION WITH AIR FORCE COMMANDER, GENERAL JUAN RAFAEL ((BUSTILLO)). BLANDON SAID, UNFORTUNATELY, BUSTILLO RECENTLY COMMITTED AN ERROR AND HURT PRESIDENT DUARTE WITH HIS SPEECH ON AIR FORCE DAY ON THE DEATH OF FORMER THIRD BRIGADE COMMANDER, LIEUTENANT COLONEL DOMINGO ((MONTERROSA)). ACCORDING TO BLANDON, DUARTE INTERPRETED BUSTILLO'S SPEECH AS A POLITICAL MESSAGE, IN WHICH BUSTILLO WAS CRITICIZING DUARTE'S GOVERNMENT FOR CONCEALING THE TRUTH ABOUT MONTERROSA'S DEATH FROM THE SALVADORAN PEOPLE. BLANDON STATED THAT BUSTILLO, DESPITE HIS CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY, IS TOO PROFESSIONAL AND TOO SERIOUS AN OFFICER TO BE INVOLVED IN ANY COUP PLOTTING WHICH MIGHT BRING ABOUT THE CUT OFF OF U.S. AID TO EL SALVADOR.

5. BLANDON EXPRESSED THE OPINION THAT IF ANY OFFICERS

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WERE TO BE INVOLVED IN COUP PLOTTING HE WOULD SUSPECT ARCE
BATTALION COMMANDER, LIEUTENANT COLONEL JOSE HUMBERTO ((GOMEZ))
OR CAVALRY REGIMENT EXECUTIVE OFFICER, LIEUTENANT COLONEL
JOAQUIN EDUARDO ((ZACAPA)). BLANDON SAID THAT ALL THE CURRENT
BRIGADE COMMANDERS WOULD BE LOYAL TO THE PRESIDENT WITH THE
POSSIBLE EXCEPTIONS OF SIXTH BRIGADE COMMANDER, COLONEL JULIO
CESAR ((YANEZ)) LOPEZ WHO HAS A DECIDED CONSERVATIVE BENT AND
FOURTH BRIGADE COMMANDER, COLONEL SIGIFREDO ((OCHOA)) PEREZ
"WHO IS PRIMARILY AN OPPORTUNIST."

6. BLANDON SAID THAT DUARTE'S ATTITUDE TOWARD GOVERNING
IS ACCEPTABLE TO HIM, BLANDON, BUT THAT THE PRESIDENT RECENTLY
MADE TWO ERRORS IN JUDGEMENT: ONE IN VETOING THE ELECTORAL LAW
BECAUSE OF ITS IMPACT ON THE CANDIDACY OF HIS SON, ALEJANDRO
((DUARTE)) DURAN, FOR MAYOR OF SAN SALVADOR AND THE SECOND IN
SUPPORTING THE POSSIBLE PROMOTION OF COLONEL LOPEZ NUILA.



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