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USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
TAGS: PREL, PHUM, PTER, PGOV, ES
SUBJECT: A/S ARONSON'S MEETING WITH MOD AND ESAF
- OFFICERS

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: DURING HIS NOVEMBER 6 VISIT, AS ARONSON,
TOGETHER WITH GENERAL THURMAN, THE AMBASSADOR AND OTHERS
MET WITH SENIOR ESAF OFFICERS INCLUDING MOD LARIOS,
CHIEF OF STAFF PONCE, THE CHIEFS OF THE SECURITY FORCES,
AND SEVERAL OTHER SENIOR OFFICERS. ARONSON ASKED THE
ESAF FOR ITS VIEWS ON THE RECENT UPSURGE IN POLITICAL
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VIOLENCE. THE ESAF LEADERS SUGGESTED THAT THE FMLN, AND
PERHAPS RIGHTWING EXTREMISTS WERE BEHIND THE VIOLENCE,
SEEKING TO PROVOKE A MILITARY REACTION AND EMBARRASS THE
GOES. ARONSON PRAISED THE ESAF'S RESTRAINT FOLLOWING
FMLN PROVOCATIONS AND SAID THAT THE ESAF NEEDED TO
CONTINUE ITS EFFORTS TO AVOID HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY ITS
MEMBERS. THE JOYA MARTINEZ CASE, AS WELL AS OTHER CASES
INVOLVING THE ESAF, WERE ALSO DISCUSSED AS PART OF
ARONSON'S STRONG URGINGS THAT THE ESAF CARRY OUT FULL
INVESTIGATIONS AND COOPERATE WITH THE PROSECUTION OF ANY

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Janina Slattery, Senior Reviewer

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AND ALL GUILTY PARTIES. GENERAL THURMAN ECHOED THOSE VIEWS AND ADDED THAT A SUCCESSFUL INVESTIGATION OF THE JOYA MARTINEZ AND FENASTRAS CASES WOULD HELP PRESUADE CONGRESS TO CONTINUE HIGH AID LEVELS TO EL SALVADOR. END SUMMARY.

3. ON NOVEMBER 6, AS ARONSON ACCOMPANIED BY SOUTHCOM CINC GENERAL THURMAN, THE AMBASSADOR AND OTHER EMBASSY AND SOUTHCOM OFFICIALS MET WITH MINISTER OF DEFENSE GEN HUMBERTO LARIOS AND CHIEF OF STAFF COL RENE EMILIO PONCE. ALSO PRESENT WERE NATIONAL POLICE DIRECTOR MACHUCA, TREASURY POLICE DIRECTOR HERNANDEZ, NATIONAL GUARD DEPUTY DIRECTOR GALVEZ, NAVY COMMANDER VILLALTA, SIGNAL SCHOOL COMMANDER CANJURA, FIRST BRIGADE COMMANDER ELENA FUENTES, AND ESAF PRESS OFFICER CHAVEZ CACERES. AT MR ARONSON'S REQUEST MOD LARIOS BRIEFED THE GROUP ON INCREASED VIOLENCE IN THE COUNTRY, WHICH LARIOS ATTRIBUTED TO A WELL-DESIGNED FMLN STRATEGY. REALIZING THAT THEY CANNOT ACHIEVE THEIR OBJECTIVES EITHER ON THE BATTLEFIELD OR THROUGH DIALOGUE, THE FMLN, HE SAID, IS ATTEMPTING TO PROVOKE THE ARMED FORCES AND GOES THROUGH INCREASED ACTS OF TERRORISM AND VIOLENCE, INCLUDING ATTACKS ON AND THE KILLING OF

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MEMBERS OF MILITARY FAMILIES. WHILE THESE ACTS HAVE CAUSED CONCERN AMONG ESAF OFFICERS, THE INSTITUTION HAS MAINTAINED ITS PROFESSIONALISM AND CALM.

4. ACCORDING TO THE MOD, THE FMLN IS TRYING TO CREATE A DIVISION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE ARMED FORCES AND BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE ESAF. FOR THAT REASON THEY ARE CARRYING OUT ACTS OF TERRORISM AND BLAMING THE ARMED FORCES. IT IS, HOWEVER, THE FMLN WHICH DEMONSTRATES THAT IT DOES NOT WANT PEACE, AS SHOWN IN ITS WITHDRAWAL FROM THE DIALOGUE PROCESS. WHAT THE FMLN REALLY WANTS, HE SAID, IS FOR OTHER GOVERNMENTS, INCLUDING THE U.S., TO PLEAD WITH THEM TO ATTEND THE CARACAS TALKS, THUS GIVING THEM (THE FMLN) AN ADVANTAGE AND PLACING ADDITIONAL PRESSURE ON THE GOES.

5. ASKED ABOUT THE OCTOBER 31 FENASTRAS BOMBING, THE MOD REPLIED THAT THE FMLN IS DESPERATELY TRYING TO CREATE PROBLEMS WITHIN THE ESAF AND THE BOMBING PROVIDES AN EXCUSE FOR FENASTRAS TO ATTACK ESAF LEADERS BY NAME. FENASTRAS, HE SAID, HAS ASKED THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY TO SUMMON HIM TO REPLY TO ACCUSATIONS OF MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN THE INCIDENT. LARIOS SAID THAT HE IS WILLING TO APPEAR BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY AS OFTEN AS NEEDED AND THAT HE HAS COMPLETE CONFIDENCE IN THE ESAF AND IN HIS COMMANDERS. LARIOS SHOWED MR ARONSON AND

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GEN THURMAN A SKETCH DRAWN BY U.S. NEWSMAN CHRIS NORTON, WHO WAS PRESENT AT FENASTRAS DURING THE BOMBING. WHILE A TRUE INVESTIGATION IS NOT POSSIBLE DUE TO FENASTRAS' REFUSAL TO PERMIT ON-SITE INVESTIGATION, NORTON'S SKETCH AND COMMENTS REVEAL THAT THE BUILDING WAS GUARDED BY FENASTRAS PEOPLE AND THE STREET AND SIDEWALK BLOCKED. THE PLACEMENT OF THE

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EXPLOSIVE DEVICE WAS ALSO DETERMINED TO HAVE BEEN
INSIDE THE FIRST GATE.

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6. WHEN ASKED ABOUT ACCUSATIONS MADE BY ESAF DESERTER JOYA MARTINEZ, LARIOS TURNED TO FIRST BRIGADE COMMANDER COL ELENA FUENTES WHO PRESENTED A BRIEF EXPLANATION OF THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS FROM THE TIME AT WHICH ONE OF HIS OFFICERS REALIZED THAT SOLDIERS HAD KILLED SOMEONE. THOSE SUSPECTED OF INVOLVEMENT WERE DETAINED,
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HE SAID, AND AN INVESTIGATION ORDERED IMMEDIATELY BY THE ESAF HIGH COMMAND. ACCORDING TO ELENA FUENTES, JOYA MARTINEZ, REALIZING THAT HE WAS KNOWN TO BE GUILTY, ESCAPED. SUBSEQUENT INFORMATION REVEALED THAT HE ASKED THE NON-GOVERNMENT HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION TO ASSIST HIM AND THROUGH THAT ORGANIZATION WAS ABLE TO ESCAPE TO THE U.S. (COMMENT: ELENA'S VERSION OF AN IMMEDIATE INVESTIGATION IS INCORRECT.)

7. ASSISTANT SECRETARY ARONSON REPLIED THAT HE AGREED WITH THE MOD'S ASSESSMENT OF FMLN STRATEGY AND HAS NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE ENEMY. NO OTHER COUNTRY IN LATIN AMERICA, HE SAID, HAS THE DUAL BURDEN OF BUILDING A DEMOCRACY AT THE SAME TIME IT IS FIGHTING A WAR AGAINST AN ENEMY WHO PLAYS BY NO RULES OF DECENCY. THE ESAF'S PROFESSIONALISM AND RESTRAINT (INCLUDING ITS MODERATE REACTION TO THE KILLING OF COL CASANOVA'S DAUGHTER) HAS ALLOWED THE COUNTRY TO ACHIEVE MAJOR REFORMS. BECAUSE OF THIS, PRESIDENT CRISTIANI IS GREETED WITH RESPECT THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. AS IN THE SAN SEBASTIAN CASE, THE ESAF MUST NOW ONCE AGAIN SHOW THAT IT IS WILLING TO INVESTIGATE A DIFFICULT CASE THROUGH A FAIR JUDICIAL PROCESS. THE RESULT OF THE ESAF'S INVESTIGATION INTO THE SAN SEBASTIAN KILLINGS WAS INCREASED CONGRESSIONAL CONFIDENCE IN EL SALVADOR. TO MAINTAIN THAT CONFIDENCE THE ESAF MUST CONTINUE TO ACT PROFESSIONALLY.

8. MR ARONSON TOLD THE OFFICERS THAT THEIR COMMENTS ON THE FMLN STRATEGY ARE CORRECT AND THAT THE FMLN IS INTERNATIONALLY BANKRUPT. THEY DO WANT TO PROVOKE A REACTION FROM THE ESAF OR ANOTHER ELEMENT OF SOCIETY TO DISCREDIT EL SALVADOR. THOSE WHO PLACED THE FENASTRAS
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BOMB, THEREFORE, ARE DOING THE WORK OF THE FMLN. THE ESAF MUST HELP THE GOVERNMENT INVESTIGATE THIS AND OTHER CRIMES TO DETERMINE RESPONSIBILITY. LIES MUST BE DEFEATED WITH THE TRUTH. THE FMLN CANNOT DEFEAT THE

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ESAF, HE SAID, BUT A REVIVAL OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE
COULD.

9. GEN THURMAN REVIEWED HIS OWN EXPERIENCE WITH
INVESTIGATIONS AS VICE CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMY. HE
THEN REFERRED TO JOYA MARTINEZ' ALLEGATIONS OF
INVOLVEMENT OF U.S. MILITARY IN DEATHS AND NOTED HE WAS
WILLING TO CONDUCT HIS OWN INVESTIGATION INTO THE
ACCUSATIONS, BUT THAT THE AMBASSADOR HAD ASKED HIM TO
WAIT PENDING THE OUTCOME OF THE GOES INVESTIGATION.

10. COL PONCE OFFERED HIS PERSONAL OPINION THAT THOSE
RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FENASTRAS BOMBING MIGHT WELL BE
FROM THE FMLN, AS INDICATED BY A SOURCE WITHIN THE
LABOR GROUP. HE ALSO SAID, HOWEVER, THAT THERE ARE
OTHER SHADOWY FORCES PRESENT WHO DO NOT WANT PEACE AND
AGREED THAT THOSE PEOPLE ARE ALSO DOING THE WORK OF THE
FMLN. THE FMLN IS USING THE INCIDENT TO TRY TO SPARK
AN INSURRECTION. THUS, IT IS ESSENTIAL TO KNOW WHO IS
RESPONSIBLE.

11. COL PONCE ALSO REFERRED TO PROBLEMS WHICH WOULD
RESULT FROM A CUT IN U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE. THE
LEFT, HE SAID, WOULD USE ANY REDUCTION TO SHOW THAT THE
USG DOES NOT SUPPORT THE CRISTIANI GOVERNMENT OR THE
ESAF COMMAND. A REDUCTION WOULD BE GOOD NEWS FOR THE
FMLN. MR ARONSON EXPLAINED THAT A CUT WAS POSSIBLE BUT
IF IT OCCURRED IT WOULD BE THE RESULT OF BUDGET
PROBLEMS IN THE USG, NOT ANYTHING SPECIFICALLY DIRECTED
AGAINST THE GOES. GEN THURMAN SAID THAT A PROMPT

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INVESTIGATION OF BOTH THE JOYA MARTINEZ AND FENASTRAS
CASES WOULD HELP IN CONVINCING THE CONGRESS TO CONTINUE
A HIGH LEVEL OF AID.

12. COMMENT: DURING A A FOLLOW-UP MEETING WITH THE
AMBASSADOR HELD ON NOVEMBER 7, PONCE INDICATED THAT AS
ARONSON'S MESSAGE HAD BEEN UNDERSTOOD AND WELL-RECEIVED
BY THE LEADERSHIP OF THE ESAF. HE ADDED THAT THE ARMED
INSITUATION WOULD CONTINUE TO WORK TOWARDS SOLVING THE
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OUTSTANDING HUMAN RIGHTS CASES AND THAT IT APPRECIATED
USG SUPPORT FOR THAT EFFORT. END COMMENT.

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