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~~(S//NC//CIA-IO//OC/NF)~~ **SUBJ: SALVADORAN MILITARY MANEUVERING TO PREVENT THE PROMOTION OF LOPEZ NUILA TO GENERAL**

Central Intelligence Agency
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~~(S//NC//CIA-IO//OC/NF)~~ WARNING: INFORMATION REPORT, NOT FINALLY EVALUATED INTELLIGENCE. REPORT CLASS **S E C R E T--WNINTEL--NOFORN--NOCONTRACT--ORCON** DIST: 04 JANUARY 1985 COUNTRY: EL SALVADOR SUBJ: SALVADORAN MILITARY MANEUVERING TO PREVENT THE PROMOTION OF LOPEZ NUILA TO GENERAL

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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REPORT CLASS **S E C R E T--WNINTEL--NOFORN--NOCONTRACT--ORCON**

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TEXT: 1. [REDACTED] COMMENT: ON 31 DECEMBER 1984, THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE (MOD) OF THE SALVADORAN GOVERNMENT PUBLISHED THE DECEMBER

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1984 GENERAL ORDER WHICH INCLUDED THE PROMOTION OF COLONEL JUAN RAFAEL ((BUSTILLO)), COMMANDER OF THE SALVADORAN AIR FORCE (FAS) AND COLONEL ADOLFO ONECIFERO ((BLANDON)), CHIEF OF THE JOINT GENERAL STAFF, TO THE RANK OF GENERAL. PRIOR TO THE PUBLICATION OF THIS GENERAL ORDER, WHICH REQUIRED THE SIGNATURE OF THE PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER AND CHIEF OF THE SALVADORAN ARMED FORCES, JOSE NAPOLEON ((DUARTE)), THERE WAS SERIOUS CONCERN IN THE RANKS OF THE SALVADORAN OFFICER CORPS THAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD ATTEMPT TO PROMOTE HIS CLOSE FRIEND COLONEL REYNALDO ((LOPEZ)) NUILA, VICE MINISTER OF DEFENSE FOR PUBLIC SECURITY, EVEN THOUGH HE WAS NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE REVIEW COMMISSION FOR PROMOTION TO GENERAL. FROM EARLY DECEMBER 1984 UNTIL THE PUBLICATION OF THE GENERAL ORDER PROMOTING ONLY BLANDON AND BUSTILLO TO GENERAL, THERE HAD BEEN A CRESCENDO OF REPORTS OF MILITARY UNREST AND SOME RUMORS OF COUP PLOTTING IN THE RANKS OF RIGHT WING OFFICERS, PRIMARILY OVER THE LOPEZ NUILA ISSUE.)

2. NEARLY ALL, IF NOT ALL, SALVADORAN MILITARY COMMANDERS OPPOSED ANY PLANS BY PRESIDENT DUARTE TO PROMOTE COLONEL LOPEZ NUILA TO GENERAL. IN NOVEMBER 1984, MANY OF THESE OFFICERS BEGAN MEETING TO DECIDE HOW BEST TO ACHIEVE THEIR OBJECTIVE-- DENIAL OF THE PROMOTION TO LOPEZ NUILA. ONE RESULT WAS A DECISION TO CREATE A CRISIS SITUATION OVER THE LOPEZ NUILA PROMOTION ISSUE. COLONEL BLANDON WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN DEVELOPING THIS PLAN, WHICH RECEIVED THE EARLY CONCURRENCE OF DEFENSE MINISTER GENERAL CARLOS EUGENIO ((VIDES)) CASANOVA. A PRINCIPAL PLAYER IN THE RANKS OF THE SENIOR COMMANDERS WAS LT. COLONEL SIGIFREDO ((OCHOA)), COMMANDER OF THE FOURTH BRIGADE AND KNOWN ULTRA-RIGHTIST OFFICER. BLANDON DIRECTED OCHOA TO EXAGGERATE THIS CRISIS SITUATION, STOPPING SHORT OF ANY ACTUAL COUP PLOTTING. COMMENT: COLONEL BLANDON AND LT. COLONEL OCHOA ARE VERY CLOSE PERSONAL FRIENDS AND ARE IDEOLOGICALLY OF SIMILAR MIND. HOWEVER, COLONEL BLANDON FULLY UNDERSTOOD THE RISK THAT OCHOA IS KNOWN TO BE POWER HUNGRY AND UNLESS CAREFULLY CONTROLLED WOULD BE INCLINED TO PLOT A COUP IF HE COULD MUSTER SUFFICIENT SUPPORT.)

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3. WHEN, IN NOVEMBER 1984, THE WORD BEGAN CIRCULATING THROUGHOUT THE SALVADORAN SENIOR MILITARY OFFICER RANKS THAT PRESIDENT DUARTE PLANNED TO PROMOTE LOPEZ NUILA TO GENERAL AND VERY NEGATIVE REACTION STARTED TO COME FROM THESE OFFICERS. COL. BLANDON SENT LT. COL. OCHOA TO TALK WITH AS MANY COMMANDERS AS POSSIBLE. OCHOA TOLD THESE OFFICERS THAT SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONE ABOUT DUARTE'S MEDDLING IN INTERNAL MILITARY AFFAIRS,

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THAT THE FUTURE OF THE SALVADORAN MILITARY LEADERSHIP HAD TO BE PROTECTED FROM CIVILIAN MEDDLING, AND THAT HE AND OTHER "SENIOR OFFICERS" HAD AGREED TO TAKE WHATEVER MEASURES NECESSARY TO PREVENT DUARTE'S PROMOTING LOPEZ NUILA. THERE WAS ALMOST UNANIMOUS AGREEMENT THAT DUARTE WAS A THREAT TO THE MILITARY. MOST SENIOR OFFICERS EXPRESSED A READINESS TO SUPPORT WHATEVER THE HIGH COMMAND BELIEVED NECESSARY TO PROTECT THE FUTURE OF THE ARMED FORCES.

4. BY MID-DECEMBER 1984 THE NATIONAL REPUBLICAN ALLIANCE (ARENA) PARTY HAD PICKED UP ON THIS ACTIVITY AND APPROACHED COL. OCHOA WITH OFFERS OF SUPPORT FOR HIS OSTENSIBLE COUP PLOTTING. THE ARENA PARTY ALSO APPROACHED COLONEL BUSTILLO WITH AN OFFER OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT IF HE WOULD JOIN OCHOA TO LAUNCH A COUP AGAINST PRESIDENT DUARTE. COMMENT: AT NO TIME WAS ANYONE IN THE ARENA PARTY AWARE THAT THE COUP TALK BEING GENERATED WAS ACTUALLY DELIBERATE RUMOR. ARENA PARTY MEMBERS ACTUALLY OFFERING MONETARY SUPPORT TO PRESUMED COUP PLOTTERS WERE JAIME ((HILL)) AND CARLOS ((LEMONS)). ARENA PARTY OFFICIALS, TRYING TO INFLUENCE OCHOA, PRESENTED HIS WIFE WITH OVER 1000 GIFTS FOR THE TROOPS IN THE FOURTH BRIGADE.)

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5. BY LATE DECEMBER WITH "COUP" RUMORS CIRCULATING THROUGHOUT THE SALVADORAN SOCIETY, THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP DECIDED THAT GENERAL VIDES CASANOVA AND VICE MINISTER OF DEFENSE, RAFAEL ((FLORES)) LIMA, SHOULD INFORM PRESIDENT DUARTE OF THE DEVELOPING SITUATION. VIDES AND FLORES MET WITH PRESIDENT DUARTE ON 28 DECEMBER. THEY TOLD HIM THAT THERE WAS A CRISIS IN THE RANKS OF THE SENIOR OFFICERS OVER THE POSSIBLE PROMOTION OF LOPEZ NUILA TO GENERAL. AT THIS TIME PRESIDENT DUARTE HAD THE RECOMMENDED LIST OF THE TWO COLONELS--BLANDON AND BUSTILLO--TO BE PROMOTED BUT HAD NOT RETURNED THE LIST WITH HIS APPROVAL TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE. THERE REMAINED THE CONCERN THAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD, WITHIN HIS POWER AS COMMANDER IN CHIEF, INCLUDE LOPEZ NUILA ON THE LIST TO BE PROMOTED. VIDES TOLD THE PRESIDENT THAT THE CRISIS SITUATION HAD REACHED A POINT WHERE THERE WAS SERIOUS TALK OF A POSSIBLE COUP BY DISGRUNTLED OFFICERS. VIDES ALSO TOLD PRESIDENT DUARTE THAT COLONELS BLANDON AND BUSTILLO HAD STATED THAT THEY WOULD NOT ACCEPT THEIR PROMOTION TO GENERAL IF LOPEZ NUILA WERE INCLUDED IN THE SAME PROMOTION LIST.

6. IT WAS UNDERSTOOD BY THOSE WHO PARTICIPATED IN THIS MANEUVER THAT COLONEL BLANDON, COLONEL BUSTILLO AND GENERAL VIDES COULD NOT BE PUT INTO A POSITION OF APPEARING TO BE

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INVOLVED IN COUP PLOTTING. THIS WAS TO PRECLUDE PRESSURE BEING BROUGHT ON THESE OFFICERS TO ACCOUNT FOR THEIR ACTIONS. HAD THIS OCCURED, IT COULD HAVE UNDERMINED THE PLAN FOR CONFRONTING PRESIDENT DUARTE ON THIS ISSUE OF LOPEZ NUILA. THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP WAS CONCERNED THAT THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT WOULD INTERVENE IN A WAY THAT DENIED THESE OFFICERS THEIR OBJECTIVE. THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP RECOGNIZED THAT MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID FROM THE UNITED STATES AND THE INERNATIONAL SUPPORT WOULD NOT SURVIVE IF AN ACTUAL COUP WAS ATTEMPTED. FOR THIS REASON, THERE WAS NEVER DURING THIS PERIOD ANY PLAN OF THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP TO OVERTHROW PRESIDENT DUARTE. THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP, ESPECIALLY AS THEY HAVE "WON" REGARDING LOPEZ NUILA, DOES NOT NOW HAVE ANY COUP PLANS UNDER CONSIDERATION.

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