

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TEGUCI 02042 01 OF 02 252101Z
ACTION RP-10

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 AID-07 INR-10 SS-15 CIAE-00 DODE-00
H-01 IO-14 NSCE-00 ARA-16 NSAE-00 SSO-00 SY-05
HA-06 TRSE-00 PM-09 PA-01 DCT-02 INRE-00 ICAE-00
SP-02 SR-04 SPRS-02 /105 W
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RELEASED IN PART
B1,25X1

O P 251936Z MAR 81
FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
TO RUEHCCMXSECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2342
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR PRIORITY
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PN PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEGUCIGALPA 2042

USCINCSO ALSO FOR INTAFF

EO 12065 GDS 3/25/87 (SHAW, DAVID G) OR-P
TAGS: SREF, PINS, ES, HO
SUBJECT: NEW REFUGEE MASSACRE ALLEGED

Classification Extended on: 10/02/2014 ~
Class: CONFIDENTIAL ~ Reason: 25X1

1. (C) SUMMARY: SALVADORAN ANTI-GUERRILLA OPERATIONS
LAST WEEK PRODUCED SUDDEN NEW INFLUX OF REFUGEES INTO
HONDURAS. PRO-GUERRILLA "SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE" ALLEGES
MASSACRE OF REFUGEES AND JOINT OPERATIONS BY SALVADORAN
AND HONDURAN TROOPS. LOCAL UNHCR OFFICIAL (PROTEXT) CONFIRMS
REFUGEE INFLUX BUT SAW NO EVIDENCE OF REFUGEE MISTREATMENT
IN HONDURAS. PRESS SOURCE SAW BODIES, APPARENTLY OF FLEEING
REFUGEES, IN RIVER WHICH FORMS FRONTIER. INCIDENT BEING
PLAYED BY GUERRILLA SUPPORTERS AS REPLAY OF ALLEGED
MAY 1980 "MASSACRE" INCIDENT. WE BELIEVE ALLEGATIONS OF
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PAGE 02 TEGUCI 02042 01 OF 02 252101Z

REFUGEE MISTREATMENT BY GOH FORCES TO BE FALSE. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) PRES OF 24 MARCH CARRIES REPORT, SOURCED TO
NATIONAL COODINATOR FOR SOLIDARITY WITH SALVADORAN
PEOPLE (CNSPS), ALLEGING MASSACRE OF SALVADORAN REFUGEES.
INCIDENT SAID TO HAVE OCCURRED ON 18 MARCH ALONG
HONDURAN BORDER NEAR TOWN OF LA VIRTUD, WHICH ALREADY
HAS LARGE REFUGEE CONCENTRATION. TOWN ADJOINS ONE OF
"BOLSONES" (POCKETS) OF DISPUTED TERRITORY WHICH HAS
BECOME LONG-ESTABLISHED GUERRILLA SANCTUARY. ACCORDING

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Donna M. DiPaolo, Senior Reviewer

TO REPORT, SOME SIX THOUSAND REFUGEES, LARGELY WOMEN, CHILDREN AND OLD PEOPLE WERE ATTEMPTING TO CROSS THE LEMPA RIVER (WHICH FORMS PART OF THE FRONTIER IN THAT ZONE) WHEN THEY WERE ATTACKED IN EARLY MORNING HOURS BY SALVADORAN PLANES, HELICOPTERS AND THREE HUNDRED GOES TROOPS. ATTACKS SAID TO HAVE CONTINUED DURING THE DAY, WITH SALVADORAN PLANES AND HELICOPTERS PENETRATING HONDURAN AIRSPACE AND MORTAR SHELLS FIRED UP TO SEVERAL KILOMETERS INTO HONDURAN TERRITORY.

3. (U) REPORT ALSO ALLEGES SERIES OF OUTRAGES BY HONDURAN BORDER TROOPS AGAINST FLEEING REFUGEES, SAID TO HAVE REACHED TOTAL OF 7000 DURING COURSE OF DAY. DETACHMENT OF OVER 400 HONDURAN TROOPS WERE ALLEGED TO HAVE CROSSED FRONTIER TO ASSIST GOES FORCES IN ATTACK ON FLEEING REFUGEES. REPORT CONCLUDES NOTING THAT UNHCR HAS BEEN ASKED TO "INVESTIGATE AND DENOUNCE" THE SITUATION.

4. (C) UNHCR LOCAL DIRECTOR (PROTECT) HAS ALREADY INVESTIGATED SITUATION, HAVING JUST RETURNED FROM THREE DAYS IN AREA. HE INFORMED POLOFF THAT SUDDEN INFLUX OF REFUGEES ACTUALLY TOTALLED ABOUT 4000 (GOH HAS CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 TEGUCI 02042 01 OF 02 252101Z

ANNOUNCED 3500) AND THAT THEY HAVE BEEN PUT UP ON EMERGENCY TENT COLONY NEAR LA VIRTUD. (UP TO NOW, REFUGEES THERE HAD BEEN "INTERGRATED" INTO THE COMMUNITY--TGU 1871.) SIGNIFICANTLY, SOURCE SAID HE OBSERVED NO RPT NO EVIDENCE OF "OUTRAGES" ALLEGEDLY COMMITTED ON HONDURAN TERRITORY. HE HAS A REPORT OF TWO REFUGEES KILLED IN HONDURAS, BUT FEW DETAILS AND NO CONFIRMATION. GOES HELICOPTER GUNSHIP ATTACKS WERE OBSERVED BUT HE SAYS THEY TOOK PLACE ACROSS LEMPA RIVER OVER SALVADORAN TERRITORY. HE REPORTS INCREASED GOH MILITARY PRESENCE IN AREA, CHECKING REFUGEES FOR WEAPONS, BUT SAYS THEY FOUND NONE. FINALLY, HE REPORTS CONTINUING GOOD COOPERATION FROM LOCAL MILITARY, ESPECIALLY IN MAKING ARRANGEMENTS TO ACCOMMODATE LATEST REFUGEE INFLUX.

5. (U) LOCAL PRESS CONTACT WHO HAS ALSO JUST VISITED AREA REPORTS SEVERAL FLEEING SALVADORANS HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO HOSPITAL IN SANTA ROSA DE COPAN WITH GUNSHOT WOUNDS, POSSIBLY SUSTAINED IN HONDURAN TERRITORY. (ACCORDING TO OTHER PRESS REPORTS THERE ARE YOUNG MALES, POSSIBLY FLEEING GUERRILLAS.) PRESS SOURCE SAW

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PAGE 01 TEGUCI 02042 02 OF 02 252036Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEGUCIGALPA 2042

USCINCSO ALSO FOR INTAFF

SEVERAL BODDIES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN FLOATING IN AND RECOVERED FROM LEMPA RIVER. HE ALSO REPORTS HEARING (UNVERIFIED) STORIES OF SALVADORAN PARA-MILITARY FORCES INVADING LA VIRTUD AREA TO HARASS REFUGEES. (THIS HAS PREVIOUSLY BEEN DENOUNCED FOR ITS OWN REASONS BY SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE - TGU 1798 - BUT IS NONETHELESS GIVEN CREDENCE BY UNHCR REP.) PRESS SOURCE NOTES MANY EYEWITNESSES TO SALVADORAN STRAFFING RUNS WITH CONFUSION AS TO WHICH COUNTRY TARGETS WERE IN.

6. (C) COMMENT: INCIDENT APPEARS TO REFLECT RECENT GOES OPERATIONS TO CLEAR GUERRILLA STRONGHOLDS IN NEIGHBORING CHALATENANGO AND CABANAS DEPARTMENTS. THERE APPEARS NO DOUBT OPERATIONS WERE CARRIED OUT
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PAGE 02 TEGUCI 02042 02 OF 02 252036Z

RIGHT UP TO, AND POSSIBLY BEHOND, HONDURAN BORDER.

[REDACTED] RESPONSE BY [REDACTED]

COORDINATING COMMITTEE, WHICH IS GUERRILLA-CONTROLLED PROPAGANDA ARM, SUGGESTS FAIR DEGREE OF SUCCESS BY GOES MILITARY. IMMEDIACY AND DETAIL OF RESPONSE CLEARLY INDICATES CNSPS CONTACT WITH GUERRILLAS WHICH HAS ALSO BEEN PICKED UP BY PRESS CONTACT. PRESENT INCIDENT IS ALREADY BEING PLAYED BY PRO-GUERRILLA ELEMENTS AS REPEAT OF MAY 1980 SUMPUL RIVER "MASSACRE" IN WHICH HONDURAN TROOPS ALLEGED TO HAVE DRIVEN HUNDREDS (OR THOUSANDS) OF REFUGEES BACK INTO FIRE OF SALVADORAN TROOPS. WE CANNOT SPEAK FOR WHAT HAPPENED ON SALVADORAN SIDE OF FRONTIER, BUT ALLEGATIONS OF HONDURAN PERSECUTION OF REFUGEES AND JOINT MILITARY OPERATIONS WITH SALVADORAN FORCES APPEAR JUST AS FLIMSY AS EARLIER REPORTED INCIDENTS. EMBASSY CONTINUES TO BELIEVE IT GOH POLICY THAT ITS FORCES LIMIT THEIR ROLE TO DEFENCE OF FRONTIER.
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