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Document: [redacted] Subject: NICARAGUA/EL SALVADOR TACTICAL UPDATE, 23-29 JANUARY 1986
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SUBJECT: NICARAGUA/EL SALVADOR TACTICAL UPDATE, 23-29 JAN

1. FOLLOWING BETWEEN TEAR LINES IS THE NICARAGUA AND EL SALVADOR TACTICAL UPDATE FOR THE PERIOD 23-29 JANUARY 1986. IT MAY BE SHARED WITH [redacted] ON A BACKGROUND USE ONLY BASIS.

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NICARAGUA AND EL SALVADOR TACTICAL UPDATE
WEEK OF 23 - 29 JANUARY 1986
OVERVIEW

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EL SALVADOR

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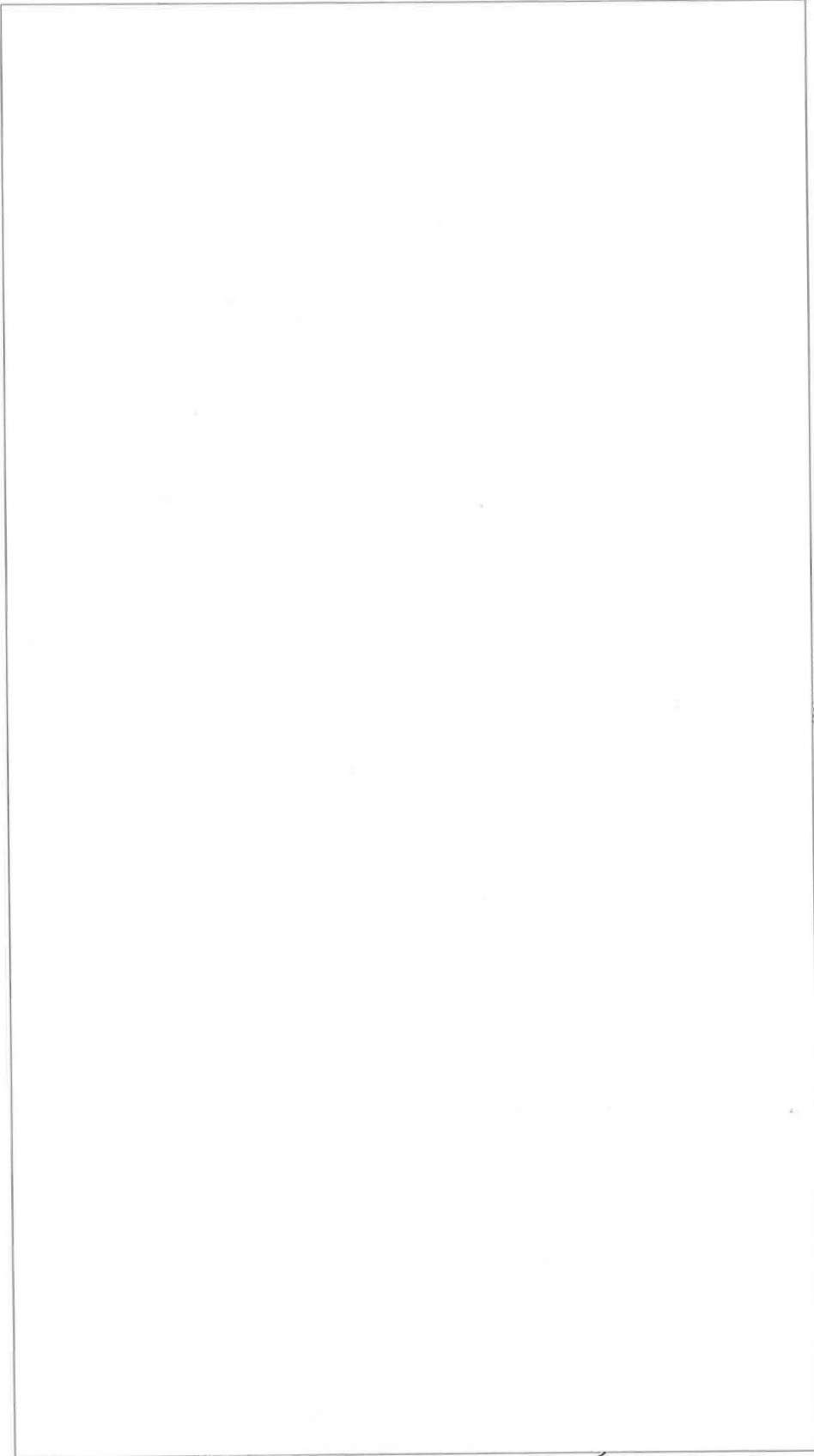
"OPERATION PHOENIX" ENTERED ITS THIRD WEEK AS SALVADORAN ARMY UNITS REACHED THE TOP OF MOUNT GUAZAPA AND BEGAN SEARCH AND DESTROY MISSIONS ON THE VOLCANO. FEW GUERRILLAS HAVE BEEN KILLED BUT GUERRILLA RESUPPLY AND OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS HAVE BEEN DISRUPTED. THE COMMANDER OF THE AIR FORCE IS CONTEMPLATING CHANGING AIRMOBILE TACTICS IN RESPONSE TO A CHANGE IN GUERRILLA TACTICS. INSURGENT ACTIVITY WAS EXTREMELY LIGHT LAST WEEK. THE REBELS PROBABLY ARE REGROUPING AFTER THEIR MAJOR SABOTAGE CAMPAIGN AND TRANSPORTATION BAN EARLIER IN THE MONTH. SEVERAL ECUADOREAN TERRORISTS REPORTEDLY MAY BEGIN OPERATING WITH THE SALVADORAN GUERRILLAS LATER THIS YEAR. (S/NF)

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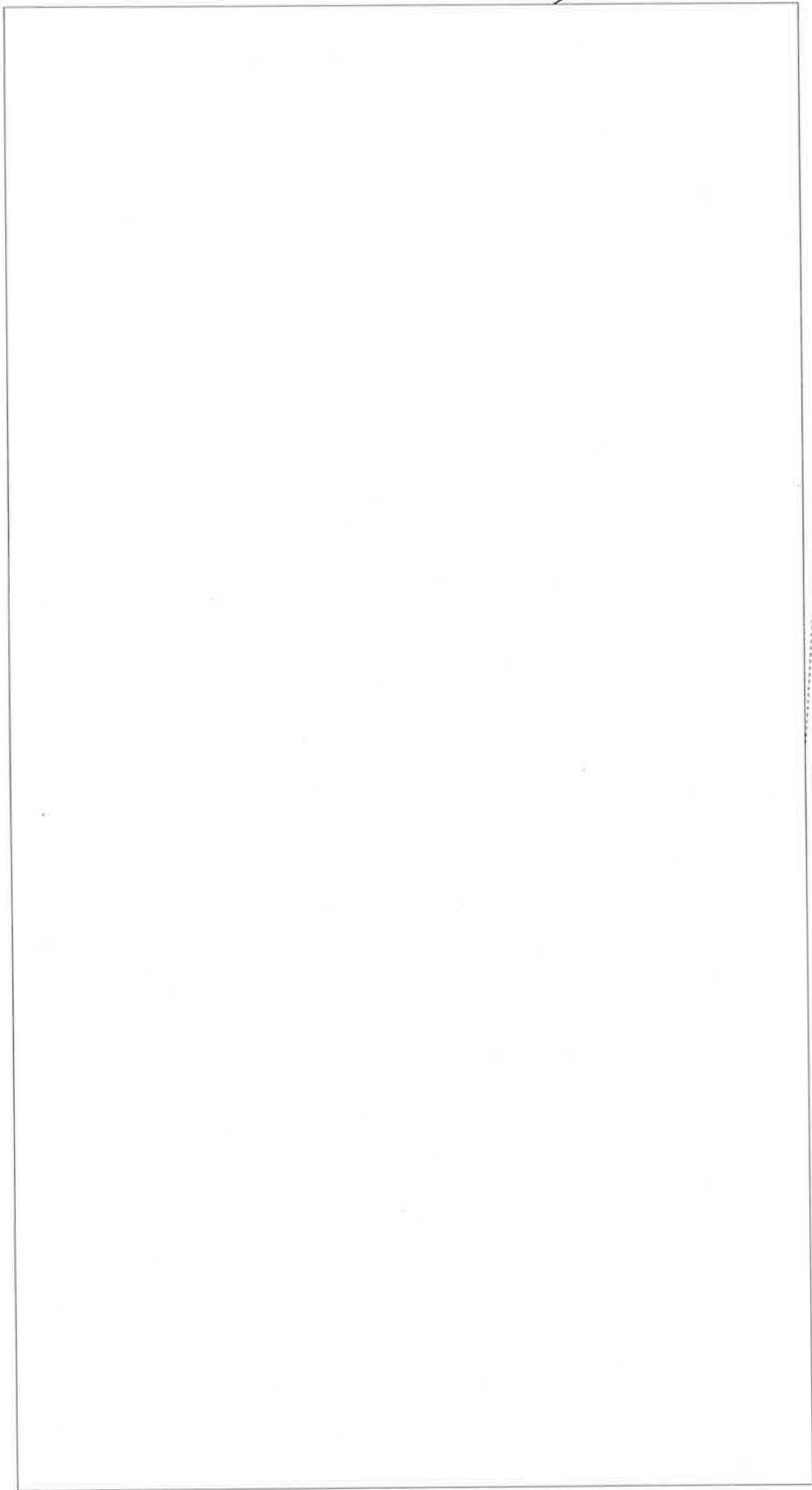
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SALVADORAN DEVELOPMENTS

GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY

ARMY UNITS REPORTED NUMEROUS CONTACTS WITH GUERRILLAS LAST WEEK AS THEY MOVED UP MOUNT GUAZAPA AFTER SEVERAL DAYS OF GRADUALLY ENCIRCLING THE VOLCANO.

--A CAPTURED INSURGENT SAID THE REBELS EXPECTED GOVERNMENT FORCES ONLY TO MANEUVER AROUND THE BASE OF THE VOLCANO AS THEY HAD DONE IN THE PAST, AND WERE SURPRISED WHEN GOVERNMENT FORCES BEGAN THEIR ASCENT UP GUAZAPA.

--ACCORDING TO THE SALVADORAN MILITARY, THE ARMY HAS KILLED SEVEN GUERRILLAS, AND CAPTURED 151 OTHERS, MANY OF WHOM ARE UNARMED CIVILIAN SUPPORTERS, IN THIS WEEK'S OPERATIONS. THE ARMED FORCES THIS WEEK SUFFERED FOUR DEAD AND 33 WOUNDED--ALMOST ALL FROM MINES AND FRIENDLY FIRE.

---THE SALVADORAN FORCES ATOP THE VOLCANO REPORTEDLY WILL PATROL THE RIDGES AND VALLEYS FOR SEVERAL DAYS IN SEARCH OF UNDERGROUND STORAGE SITES AND HIDING GUERRILLAS. MORE THAN 90 REBEL UNDERGROUND STORAGE SITES HAVE BEEN DISCOVERED--SO FAR.

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--OUR [REDACTED] THAT THE AIR FORCE RESPONSE TO CALLS FOR FIRE SUPPORT HAVE BEEN EXCELLENT BUT THAT CALLS FOR RESUPPLY, EVACUATION AND MOVEMENT OF EQUIPMENT ARE BEING RESISTED BY AIR FORCE OPERATIONS. (S NF)

THE ARMED FORCES MAY ALTER ITS QUICK STRIKE, COORDINATED AIR/GROUND ATTACKS IN THE FACE OF CHANGED REBEL TACTICS.

---AIR FORCE COMMANDER BUSTILLO SAID THE MOST RECENT "PINK TEAM" OPERATIONS FAILED BECAUSE INSURGENTS TOOK COVER WHEN HELICOPTERS APPROACHED, RATHER THAN STANDING THEIR GROUND AND FIGHTING AS IN THE PAST. HE CRITICIZED THE POOR PERFORMANCE OF THE AIRBORNE BATTALION AND CHASTIZED ITS LEADERSHIP FOR A LACK OF AGGRESSIVENESS, ACCORDING TO A [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] REPORTED THAT BUSTILLO ORDERED THE COMMANDER OF THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS GROUP (GOE) TO DEVELOP MORE EFFECTIVE TECHNIQUES FOR TARGETING REBEL CONCENTRATIONS FOR PINK TEAM ATTACKS. THE NEW PLAN REPORTEDLY ENTAILS THE INFILTRATION OF GOE RECONNAISSANCE TEAMS INTO A REBEL BASE AREA SO THAT AIRSTRIKES CAN BE PINPOINTED BEFORE AIRBORNE TROOPS ARE INSERTED. GOE TEAMS THEN WILL ESTABLISH AMBUSH POSITIONS TO BLOCK ESCAPE ROUTES.

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---BUSTILLO REPORTEDLY APPROVED THE NEW PLAN AND INSTRUCTED THAT IT BE USED DURING OPERATION PHOENIX. (S NF [REDACTED])

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THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS GROUP CARRIED OUT A HELIBORNE RAID ON TWO REBEL CAMPS ON 22 JANUARY.

-L-THE ATTACK WAS BASED ON INFORMATION PROVIDED BY A DESERTER, [REDACTED]

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---FOLLOWING A PREPARATORY AIRSTRIKE, AN 80-MAN GOE TEAM -- SUBSTITUTING FOR THE AIRBORNE -- ATTACKED THE REBEL CAMPS. EIGHT INSURGENTS WERE KILLED, THEIR WEAPONS RECOVERED, AND A LARGE QUANTITY OF EXPLOSIVES, MEDICINES, AND FOODSTUFFS WERE DESTROYED. (S/NF [REDACTED])

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THE AMBUSH AND ANNIHILATION OF AN 11-MAN ARMY PATROL ON 17 JANUARY COULD DELAY MORE EXTENSIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF SMALL-UNIT OPERATIONS.

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--OUR [REDACTED] SAID INADEQUATE SECURITY ALLOWED THE UNIT TO BE OVERWHELMED; ONE SOLDIER WAS KILLED, THREE WOUNDED, AND SEVEN CAPTURED IN THE AMBUSH.

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---[REDACTED] ALSO NOTED THAT TRAINING IN SMALL UNIT TACTICS HAS LAGGED BEHIND ITS IMPLEMENTATION. HE SAID TRAINING MAY BE ACCELERATED TO AVOID REPETITION OF SUCH INCIDENTS. (C/NF)

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THE CONTROVERSIAL COMMANDER OF THE FOURTH BRIGADE REPORTEDLY HAS SUBMITTED HIS RESIGNATION FOLLOWING A DISPUTE WITH THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE.

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---[REDACTED] COLONEL OCHOA WAS THE ONLY OFFICER TO RAISE OBJECTIONS AT AN ECONOMIC BRIEFING GIVEN TO SENIOR COMMANDERS BY PRESIDENT DUARTE ON 19 JANUARY. OCHOA -- WHO ARGUED THAT DUARTE SHOULD NOT INVOLVE THE MILITARY IN POLITICAL MATTERS -- WAS REBUKED BY GENERAL VIDES.

---OCHOA SUBMITTED HIS RESIGNATION AFTER THE MEETING AND IT IS UNDER CONSIDERATION NOW. DUARTE HAS URGED THAT THE HIGH COMMAND ACCEPT THE RESIGNATION BUT A FINAL DECISION REPORTEDLY WILL NOT BE MADE UNTIL THE GOVERNMENT ASSESSES THE PUBLIC REACTION TO ITS ECONOMIC REFORMS AND UNTIL THE MILITARY SITUATION IN OCHOA'S ZONE IS REVIEWED. (S/NF [REDACTED])

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GUERRILLA ACTIVITY

INSURGENT-INITIATED ACTIVITY WAS EXTREMELY LIGHT LAST WEEK WITH ONLY SCATTERED REPORTS OF SMALL AMBUSHES AND MINOR SABOTAGE OF THE ELECTRICAL SYSTEM.

---THE REBELS PROBABLY ARE REGROUPING AFTER THEIR SABOTAGE CAMPAIGN AND TRANSPORTATION BAN EARLIER THIS MONTH. (C/NF)

A GUERRILLA COMBATANT HAS PROVIDED DETAIL ON REBEL ACTIVITY IN PEACEFUL WESTERN EL SALVADOR.

---THE GUERRILLA SAYS FOUR FACTIONS ARE NOW OPERATING IN THE THREE WESTERN DEPARTMENTS AND THEY ARE COORDINATING LOGISTICS AND PLANNING, [REDACTED]

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---ONE GROUP REPORTEDLY HAS SOME 260 MEN IN THE WEST AND IS TRYING TO DEVELOP AN INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE AREAS OF SANTA ANA VOLCANO AND SANTA ANA CITY. (S NF [redacted])

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EXTERNAL SUPPORT

ECUADOREAN TERRORISTS REPORTEDLY HAVE SEALED AN AGREEMENT WITH SALVADORAN GUERRILLAS TO BEGIN TRAINING SOME OF THEIR MEMBERS IN EL SALVADOR THIS YEAR.

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-- [redacted] SAID AN FMLN REPRESENTATIVE AGREED IN A DECEMBER MEETING WITH MEMBERS OF THE "ALFARO LIVES" GROUP TO TRAIN SEVEN ECUADOREANS FOR ONE YEAR IN GUERRILLA TACTICS AFTER THEY RECEIVE FOUR TO SIX MONTHS OF POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL PREPARATION IN NICARAGUA.

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--IN ADDITION, THE FMLN REPRESENTATIVE PROMISED THE ECUADOREANS THAT THE SALVADORAN COMMUNIST PARTY WOULD PRESENT THEIR PETITION FOR FORMAL RECOGNITION AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO THE CUBAN AND LIBYAN GOVERNMENTS. (S NF [redacted])

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