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ACTION ARA-01

INFO LOG-00 ACDA-17 AID-01 CIAE-00 C-01 DODE-00 EB-01
EUR-01 HA-09 H-01 INRE-00 INR-01 IO-19 LAB-04
L-03 ADS-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 OIC-02 OMB-01 PA-01
PM-02 PRS-01 P-01 RP-10 SIL-00 SNP-00 SP-00
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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0271
INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY MEXICO
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MADRID
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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PGOV, PINS, PHUM, ES
SUBJECT: ARENA MAVERICK COMMENTS ON INTRA-PARTY JOCKEYING
AND THE PEACE PROCESS

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REVIEW AUTHORITY: Oscar Olson, Senior Reviewer

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1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY. ACCORDING TO SIGIFREDO OCHOA, A RETIRED COLONEL AND FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ELECTRIC COMPANY (CEL), PRESIDENT CRISTIANI IS UNDER CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE FROM PARTY HARD-LINERS TO TAKE A TOUGHER STAND IN THE PEACE PROCESS. OCHOA BELIEVES THAT THE CONFLICTING FORCES AT WORK IN THESE TWO PROCESSES COULD PROVOKE A CRISIS FOR CRISTIANI. ALTHOUGH HE CORRECTLY IDENTIFIES CRISTIANI'S CURRENT DILEMMA, OCHOA DISINGENUOUSLY DISTANCES HIMSELF FROM THE SOURCE OF THE PRESIDENT'S PROBLEMS. END SUMMARY.

3. DURING AN INTRODUCTORY MEETING ON OCTOBER 28, ARENA LEGISLATIVE DEPUTY AND PARTY MAVERICK SIGIFREDO OCHOA PEREZ GAVE POLOFF HIS VIEW OF INTRA-PARTY JOCKEYING AND ITS EFFECT ON PRESIDENT CRISTIANI'S ABILITY TO MANAGE THE PEACE PROCESS. OCHOA EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT CRISTIANI COULD SOON FACE A SERIOUS CRISIS

BECAUSE OF THE INCREASINGLY HARD-LINE THAT HAS EMERGED WITHIN HIS RULING PARTY.

4. ACCORDING TO OCHOA, CRISTIANI'S TOUGH PUBLIC STANCE ON FMLN DEMOBILIZATION REFLECTS THE INFLUENCE OF A SMALL GROUP OF ARENA HARD-LINERS WHO ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE PARTY'S FORTUNES IN THE 1994 ELECTIONS. OCHOA CLAIMED THIS GROUP WAS LED BY ARENA PRESIDENT/SAN SALVADOR MAYOR ARMANDO CALDERON SOL, AND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT ROBERTO ANGULO. (COMMENT: CURIOUSLY, OCHOA HIMSELF IS USUALLY IDENTIFIED WITH THOSE HARD-LINERS IN ARENA WHO HAVE BEEN URGING CRISTIANI TO TAKE A TOUGHER STANCE, WHILE CALDERON SOL AND ANGULO ARE VIEWED AS MODERATES WHO ARE TRYING TO FIND A VIABLE MIDDLE GROUND FOR THE PRESIDENT.)

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5. OCHOA WAS PARTICULARLY CRITICAL OF CALDERON SOL, WHOM HE ACCUSED OF BEING WILLING "TO DO ANYTHING" IN PURSUIT OF THE ARENA PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY. IN OCHOA'S VIEW, THE OVERWEENING AMBITION OF CALDERON SOL IS CONTRIBUTING TO THE PARTY'S STEADY DRIFT TO THE RIGHT AND THUS PLACING CRISTIANI IN A DIFFICULT POSITION. CALDERON SOL'S BID FOR HIS PARTY'S PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY IS REPORTEDLY BEING FINANCED BY WEALTHY FAMILIES, SOME OF WHOM REMAIN OUTSIDE OF THE COUNTRY. OCHOA ALSO CRITICIZED CALDERON SOL FOR HIS ALLEGED TIES TO EXTREMISTS IN THE PARTY. (COMMENT: THESE CHARGES AGAINST CALDERON SOL ARE RATHER SELF-SERVING SINCE OCHOA VIEWS HIMSELF AS A SERIOUS CONTENDER FOR ARENA'S PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION AND, IN FACT, ASPIRES TO INHERIT ROBERTO D'AUBUISSON'S ROLE AS PARTY LEADER.)

5. COMMENTING ON THE RECENT SPATE OF RIGHTIST PROPAGANDA, OCHOA EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THESE "PHANTOM GROUPS" ARE CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE SIMILAR TO THAT OF THE EARLY 80'S. ALTHOUGH HE STOPPED SHORT OF PREDICTING A RESURGENCE OF RIGHTIST VIOLENCE, OCHOA ACCUSED THE PEOPLE BEHIND THESE SHADOWY GROUPS OF TRYING TO UNDERMINE THE PEACE PROCESS. SPEAKING IN HIS CAPACITY AS A RETIRED ARMY COLONEL, OCHOA DENOUNCED MEMBERS OF THESE GROUPS AS MOSTLY INDIVIDUALS WHO WERE UNAFFECTED BY THE WAR AND WHO THEREFORE WANT TO RETURN TO STATUS QUO ANTE. (COMMENT: OCHOA WAS WIDELY QUOTED IN HIS PUBLIC DENUNCIATION OF THE RECENT THREAT ISSUED BY THE "MAXIMILIANO HERNANDEZ MARTINEZ BRIGADE." NEVERTHELESS, HE HIMSELF HAS BEEN LINKED TO INDIVIDUALS WHO REPORTEDLY HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN DEATH SQUAD ACTIVITY.)

6. ACCORDING TO OCHOA, A SMALL BUT FINANCIALLY POWERFUL SECTOR OF ARENA IS TRYING TO PREVENT ANY SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGES THAT MIGHT RESULT FROM THE PEACE PROCESS. HE CLAIMED THAT THIS GROUP

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IS MANIPULATING THE BANKING SECTOR IN ORDER TO TORPEDO LAND TRANSFERS. AS A RESULT, OCHOA CLAIMS TO BE SPEARHEADING A CAMPAIGN TO PROVIDE LOW-INTEREST LOANS TO SMALL FARMERS IN THE FORMERLY CONFLICTIVE EASTERN DEPARTMENTS WHICH REMAIN UNDER-DEVELOPED.

7. BIO NOTE/COMMENT: OCHOA'S ANALYSIS REFLECTS THE VIEW OF AN AMBITIOUS MAVERICK WHO HAS BEEN ISOLATED BY PARTY LEADERS SUCH AS CALDERON SOL, THE CURRENT FRONT-RUNNER FOR ARENA'S PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION. OCHOA, WHO ASPIRES TO LEAD THE POPULIST WING OF ARENA, AND TO BECOME ROBERTO D'AUBUISSON'S HEIR, IS A FORMER SOLDIER WHO WAS KNOWN FOR HIS CHARISMATIC APPEAL AMONG THE PEASANTRY. HIS REMARKS CONCERNING RIGHTIST PRESSURE ON CRISTIANI ARE PARTICULARLY DISINGENUOUS SINCE THEY SEEM AIMED AT DISCREDITING HIS ARENA ADVERSARIES, AND DISTANCING HIMSELF FROM CHARGES THAT HE IS PART OF THE GROUP IN THE PARTY THAT IS TRYING TO OBSTRUCT THE PEACE PROCESS.

ROMERO
(DOC:OCHOA)

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