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**MRN:** 89 SAN SALVADOR 224  
**Date/DTG:** Jan 07, 1989 / 070000Z Jan 89  
**From:** AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR  
**Action:** WASHDC, SECSTATE ROUTINE  
**E.O.:** Unknown  
**TAGS:** PHUM, PREL, PGOV, ES  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Subject:** USG RESPONSE TO DETERIORATION IN HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN EL SALVADOR

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ACTION HA-09

INFO LOG-00 ADS-00 AID-00 INR-07 SS-00 OIC-02 CIAE-00  
EB-00 DODE-00 H-01 IO-19 NSCE-00 ARA-00 NSAE-00  
SSO-00 L-03 LAB-04 TRSE-00 PM-10 PA-01 STR-17  
SIL-01 INRE-00 RP-10 USIE-00 SP-02 SR-06 PRS-01  
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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6031

~~SECRET~~ SECTION 01 OF 02 SAN SALVADOR 00224

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR  
TAGS: PHUM, PREL, PGOV, ES  
SUBJECT: USG RESPONSE TO DETERIORATION IN HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN EL SALVADOR

REF: A) 12/29 TELCON ASSISTANT SECRETARY ABRAMS AND DCM; B) 88 SAN SALVADOR 16895

1. ~~SECRET~~ - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. I SHARE WASHINGTON'S PERCEPTION AND CONCERN (CONVEYED REFTELCON) THAT A SERIES OF RECENT EVENTS CALL INTO SERIOUS QUESTION OUR CLAIM THAT THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN EL SALVADOR CONTINUES TO MOVE IN A POSITIVE DIRECTION. THE ASSERTION THAT POLITICALLY RELATED VIOLENCE IS ON AN UPSWING IS DISTURBING, BUT CAN BE PARTIALLY EXPLAINED AS THE BY-PRODUCT OF INTENSIFIED POLITICAL ACTIVITY AS MARCH 19

APPROACHES, AND A HEIGHTENED LEVEL OF GUERRILLA URBAN  
TERRORISM PROVOKES REACTIVE RIGHT-WING VIOLENCE.  
LACK OF PROGRESS ON THE "OLD" HUMAN RIGHTS CASES,  
SUCH AS THE ROMERO ASSASSINATION, CAN BE RATIONALIZED  
AS ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE WEAKNESSES OF THE SALVADORAN

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JUDICIAL SYSTEM IN THE EARLY 1980'S. BUT THE USG HAS  
REPEATEDLY ADVANCED THE THEORY THAT THE GOES/ESAF  
RESPONSE TO A "NEW" HUMAN RIGHTS OUTRAGE WOULD BE  
ALTOGETHER DIFFERENT SINCE OUR SALVADORAN ALLIES NOW  
(A) RECOGNIZE AND ACCEPT THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS ISSUE  
TO OUR PRESENT ASSISTANCE RELATIONSHIP; AND (B) HAVE  
BEEN GIVEN THE TECHNICAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES TO  
INVESTIGATE, ASSIGN RESPONSIBILITY AND PROSECUTE  
WRONGDOERS WHEN A VIOLATION OCCURS.

3. THE SEPTEMBER 21 DEATHS OF TEN CAMPESINOS IN LA  
CEBADILLA HAVE PUT OUR "NEW CASE" THEORY TO THE TEST;  
TO DATE THE GOES/ESAF GIVE EVERY INDICATION THAT THEY  
WILL FAIL. DESPITE DEALING WITH AN EVENT THAT WAS  
DRAMATIC AND WIDELY PUBLICIZED, CONTAINING ELEMENTS  
THAT COULD BE EASILY INVESTIGATED (MANY BODIES AND  
OTHER PHYSICAL EVIDENCE; AND CONFLICTING VERSIONS OF  
WHAT HAPPENED THAT COULD BE CONFIRMED OR REJECTED BY  
THAT EVIDENCE), NONE OF THE INVESTIGATIONS HAS BEEN  
AGGRESSIVE OR IMAGINATIVE IN TRYING TO GET AT THE  
TRUTH. DESPITE PRESIDENT DUARTE'S PERSONAL  
ASSURANCES TO ME ON THREE OCCASIONS, AND TO THE  
SECRETARY AND A/S ABRAMS DURING THEIR OAS DISCUSSIONS  
THAT HE WOULD PURSUE THE EVIDENCE NO MATTER WHERE IT  
LED, AND SEE THE GUILTY PUNISHED EVEN AT RISK OF A  
COUP, HE HAS NOT FOLLOWED THROUGH. GIVEN THE TIME  
THAT HAS PASSED, DUARTE'S MIXED SIGNALS AT THE  
BEGINNING AS TO WHEN/IF THE SIU SHOULD ENTER THE  
INVESTIGATION, AND THE SIU'S LACK OF ENTHUSIASM AND  
FOLLOW-THROUGH NOW THAT IT IS OFFICIALLY ON THE CASE,  
I AM MORE AND MORE CONVINCED THAT DUARTE WILL BE  
GREAT RHETORIC, BUT NO RESULTS. THE PRESIDENT DOES  
NOT APPEAR WILLING TO TEST THE LIMITS OF HIS POWERS;  
ABSENT THAT WILLINGNESS THE ESAF WILL SIMPLY WAIT HIM

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OUT, ASSUMING THAT HIS SUCCESSOR (OF WHICHEVER PARTY)  
WILL TAKE THE EASY WAY OUT AND NOT PURSUE AN INCIDENT  
THAT HAPPENED ON THE PREVIOUS WATCH.

4. IF THIS PREDICTION IS CORRECT, ABSENT A FORCEFUL  
PUSH BY THE USG, THE LA CEBADILLA CASE WILL GO INTO

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F-2019-07289

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2/9/2026

THE BOOKS AS ONE MORE FAILURE OF THE GOES IN A MAJOR HUMAN RIGHTS CASE. EMBASSY TALKS WITH US JOURNALISTS AND VISITING CONGRESSMEN AND STAFFERS WOULD INDICATE THAT THE CASE HAS NOT, AS MANY SALVADORANS BELIEVE, FADED AWAY. IF WE ARE TO TURN THIS CASE, AND THE LARGER ISSUE, AROUND I BELIEVE THE EMBASSY AND THE DEPARTMENT MUST ACT NOW, AND WITH ALL THE LEVERAGE WE CAN MUSTER. LET ME COMMENT ON THE SUGGESTIONS YOU ASKED DAVID DLOUHY (REFTELCON) TO EXAMINE, STEPS THAT MIGHT BE TAKEN TO ARREST THE PRESENT SLIDE TO A WORSENING HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION:

(A) STATEMENT OF CONCERN AT DEPARTMENT'S NOON BRIEFING: WHILE HELPFUL IN KEEPING THE ISSUE IN THE PRESS, I'M NOT CONVINCED SUCH A STATEMENT WILL ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING BEYOND THAT.

(B) PUBLICIZED ACEVEDO-SHULTZ MEETING: ALSO OF SOME USE, BUT NOT MUCH. I HAVE ALREADY HAD A LONG SESSION WITH ACEVEDO (REF B), AND HE CLAIMS TO UNDERSTAND THE DAMAGE BACKSLIDING CAUSES. HE PROMISED ALL HELP HE COULD MUSTER. THE PROBLEMS WITH ANOTHER ACEVEDO APPROACH ARE: (A) FACT THAT FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS VIRTUALLY NO CAPACITY TO INFLUENCE INTERNAL POLITICAL MATTERS SUCH AS THIS, AND (B) CASTIGATION OF DUARTE ADMINISTRATION PLAYS BEST AMONG VERY PEOPLE MOST CULPABLE OF BACKSLIDE, I.E., RENEGADE ESAF'ERS AND

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6032

~~SECRET~~ SECTION 02 OF 02 SAN SALVADOR 00224

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR  
TAGS: PHUM, PREL, PGOV, ES  
SUBJECT: USG RESPONSE TO DETERIORATION IN HUMAN

D'AUBUISSON FOLLOWERS.

(C) VISIT BY CIVILIAN/MILITARY ENVOYS TO REPEAT 1983 BUSH MESSAGE: IDEA OF REPEATING THE BUSH TOUGH MESSAGE COULD WORK, GIVEN THE RIGHT MESSENGERS. CJCS ADM CROWE WAS JUST HERE, DELIVERED A STRONG REMINDER OF HUMAN RIGHTS, WITH NO DISCERNIBLE IMPACT. I HAVE NO OBJECTION TO A HIGH LEVEL MESSENGER, BUT EXPERIENCES WITH THIS APPROACH IN PAST HAVE BEEN DISCOURAGING.

(D) MEETING WITH DUARTE: I HAD AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE PRESIDENT ON 1/5. USING TALKERS (REF B) I TOOK HIM THROUGH WHY WE DON'T THINK ENOUGH IS BEING DONE ON LA CEBADILLA AND ASKED WHAT MORE HE/WE CAN DO. I WAS CERTAIN HE WOULD BLAME EVERYTHING ON ARENA, THE ASSEMBLY, THE SUPREME COURT, ET AL. HE DID.

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(E) THE SARAVIA EXTRADITION: I TOO WANT TO KEEP THE SARAVIA EXTRADITION ALIVE; WHAT THE POSSIBILITIES ARE, AND WHERE THEY MIGHT LEAD US, IS AS YET UNCLEAR. I SPOKE BLUNTLY TO NEW ATTORNEY GENERAL GARCIA ON JANUARY 6 (SUBSTANCE OF CONVERSATION WILL BE REPORTED SEPTEL). I PLAN TO TALK TO CHACHI GUERRERO, IN THE PLAINEST OF TERMS, ON HIS RETURN FROM VACATION. I HAVE ALREADY TOLD FREDY CRISTIANI OF HOW ARENA'S ROLE IN THE SARAVIA CASE LIKELY WILL BE INTERPRETED, I.E., ANOTHER DISTURBING INDICATOR THAT THE PARTY DOES NOT BELIEVE IN THE VIGOROUS PURSUIT OF THE TRUTH IN HUMAN RIGHTS MATTERS. FREDY, AND OTHERS, THROW BACK IN OUR FACES THE SLOWNESS AND LEGALISMS THAT THE US JUSTICE SYSTEM CONTRIBUTES TO SARAVIA'S CONTINUED STAY IN FLORIDA. IT IS DIFFICULT TO ANSWER THE QUESTION: "IF HE'S THERE ILLEGALLY, WHY DON'T YOU SIMPLY DEPORT HIM BACK TO EL SALVADOR?" CAN ANYTHING BE DONE AT DOJ TO SIMPLIFY/HASTEN OUR DEPORTATION PROCEDURES? WE WILL INFORM OF ANY POSSIBLE AVENUES OF PURSUIT AFTER DISCUSSIONS WITH CHACHI, FURTHER WITH THE NEW ATTORNEY GENERAL, AND ANYONE ELSE WHO MIGHT HAVE AN IDEA.

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(F) GETTING OUT IN FRONT OF THE CONGRESS: I THOROUGHLY AGREE. I FEEL THAT THE CASE ON WHICH THERE WILL BE THE MOST CONGRESSIONAL ATTENTION, AND THE ONE ON WHICH WE STAND THE BEST CHANCE OF SHOWING WHAT WE CAN DO IF WE'RE WILLING TO APPLY PRESSURE, IS THE LA CEBADILLA CASE. IF WE CAN MOVE FORWARD ON THAT ONE, LEADING TO THE POSSIBLE PROSECUTION OF THOSE RESPONSIBLE (IF AN ESAF TYPE, A REAL BREAKTHROUGH), THE OTHER CASES WOULD DIMINISH IN IMPORTANCE. IN AN EFFORT TO STIMULATE PRESSURE AND

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FORWARD MOTION ON LA CEBADILLA, WE HAVE PUT TOGETHER AN ACTION PLAN WHICH WILL BE FORWARDED SEPTEL. WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS FOR OTHER ACTIONS YOU/WE MIGHT TAKE. WALKER

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