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ACTION WHA-00

INFO LOG-00 NP-00 ACQ-00 CIAE-00 DINT-00 DOTE-00 SRPP-00  
DS-00 EB-00 OIGO-00 FAAE-00 FBIE-00 UTED-00 VC-00  
H-01 TEDE-00 INR-00 L-00 VCE-00 AC-01 NSAE-00  
OMB-01 PA-00 PM-00 PRS-00 ACE-00 P-00 SP-00  
SS-00 TEST-00 TRSE-00 T-00 USIE-00 PMB-00 DSCC-00  
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RELEASED IN FULL

P 172215Z AUG 01  
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9601  
INFO ALCA COLLECTIVE  
USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO  
NSC WASHDC  
DOD WASHDC

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Oscar Olson, Senior  
Reviewer

UNCLAS SAN SALVADOR 002690

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: PREL, MARR, PBTS, PINR, ES  
SUBJECT: EL SALVADOR ASKS HONDURAS FOR PROOF OF SPYING

REF: A) TEGUCIGALPA 02614, B) SAN SALVADOR 02652

1. SUMMARY: SALVADORAN OFFICIALS INSIST THEY HAVE NO REASON TO BELIEVE TWO SALVADORAN MILITARY DIPLOMATS WERE SPYING, AS HONDURAS ALLEGES. PRESIDENT FRANCISCO FLORES SAID HE  
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WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS THE MATTER DIRECTLY WITH PRESIDENT FLORES OF HONDURAS, AND CALLED ON SALVADORANS NOT TO ESCALATE THE PUBLIC RHETORIC FURTHER. DESPITE REFTTEL A, IN DISCUSSIONS WITH AMBASSADOR, NEITHER THE PRESIDENT NOR ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER EXPRESSED ANY INTEREST IN U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN THE CASE. THE SALVADORAN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE SPONSORED A FULL-PAGE AD AUGUST 17 IN A MAJOR DAILY NEWSPAPER SAYING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ESAF AND THE HOAF HIGH COMMANDS ARE CORDIAL. END SUMMARY.

2. FOREIGN MINISTER DE AVILA TOLD THE PRESS SHE HAD ASKED HONDURAS FOR PROOF THE TWO OFFICIALS WERE SPYING. BEFORE LEAVING FOR THE RIO SUMMIT IN SANTIAGO, SHE SAID THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE THE TWO HAD ACTED INCORRECTLY. AUGUST 17, PRESIDENT FRANCISCO FLORES SAID HE WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS THE MATTER PRESIDENT-TO-PRESIDENT WITH FLORES OF HONDURAS IN A LOW-KEY MANNER. ESCALATING RHETORIC NEVER LEADS TO PRODUCTIVE RESULTS, HE SAID. HE HAD WANTED TO TALK TO FLORES AT THE RIO SUMMIT, HE NOTED, AND IS DISAPPOINTED THAT THE HONDURAN PRESIDENT CANCELED HIS TRIP. THE

SALVADORAN PRESIDENT ASKED WHY THE GOES WOULD WANT TO SPY ON ITS NEIGHBOR AND SAID EL SALVADOR ONLY WANTS GREATER COOPERATION AND INTEGRATION WITH HONDURAS. DESPITE SUGGESTIONS IN REFTEL A, IN DISCUSSIONS WITH AMBASSADOR, NEITHER PRESIDENT FLORES NOR ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER DADA HAS EXPRESSED ANY INTEREST IN U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN THE SPYING CASE.

3. THE SALVADORAN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE BOUGHT A FULL-PAGE AD IN LA PRENSA GRAFICA, A LEADING DAILY, AUGUST 17 TO STATE: THE ESAF IS CONSCIOUS AND RESPECTFUL OF THE NEED FOR  
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REGIONAL INTEGRATION; RELATIONS BETWEEN ESAF AND HOAF HIGH COMMANDS ARE CORDIAL AND IMPROVING THROUGH INSTITUTIONS LIKE THE CENTRAL AMERICAN ARMED FORCES CONFERENCE; AND THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAD OBTAINED EXPLANATIONS FROM THE ACCUSED AND ESTABLISHED THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE TO JUSTIFY THEIR DETENTION.

4. ACCORDING TO SALVADORAN PRESS REPORTS, THE TWO SALVADORANS ACCUSED AUGUST 14 BY HONDURAS OF SPYING RETURNED TO EL SALVADOR BY LAND AUGUST 15. HONDURAN JUDGE RITA ONDINA NUNEZ FOUND SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE TO INCRIMINATE THEM AND SAID THEY FAILED TO PROVE THEY HAD DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY. SHE RELEASED THEM, HOWEVER, WHEN A SALVADORAN EMBASSY CAR CAME TO PICK THEM UP. ALEJANDRO DANILO REYES CERNA, AN ASSISTANT IN THE SALVADORAN DEFENSE ATTACHE'S OFFICE IN TEGUCIGALPA, AND JOSE MARQUINA VARGAS, A SECRETARY IN THE OFFICE, REPORTEDLY WERE HANDCUFFED AUGUST 14 AFTER BEING ARRESTED AT A MILITARY HOSPITAL. THEIR COMPUTER AND VEHICLE WERE CONFISCATED, AND THE GOES ASKED THAT THE ITEMS BE RETURNED. EL SALVADOR'S AMBASSADOR TO HONDURAS, SIGIFREDO OCHOA PEREZ, SAID HONDURAS VIOLATED THE VIENNA CONVENTION BY DETAINING THE DIPLOMATS. HONDURAN OFFICIALS SAID, GIVEN THE SPY EVIDENCE, THEY ACTED WITHIN THE LAW. SALVADORAN OFFICIALS HAVE PROTESTED PUBLICLY ABOUT THE MANNER IN WHICH THE DIPLOMATS WERE TREATED AND THE WAY IN WHICH THE INFORMATION WAS SO BROADLY PUBLICIZED IN HONDURAS.

5. THE SALVADORAN PRESS RAN EXTENSIVE PHOTOS FROM HONDURAN TELEVISION SHOWING VIDEOTAPES, COMPUTER DISKS, AND PHOTOCOPIED DOCUMENTS PROVIDED BY THE HONDURAN ARMED FORCES  
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AS PROOF OF THE SALVADORANS' SPYING. THE DOCUMENTS ALLEGEDLY INCLUDE FALSE HONDURAN IDS, AND HONDURAN MILITARY PLANS ON LOGISTICS AND NAVAL OPERATIONS. IN VIDEOTAPE FROM AUG. 7 AND 8, THE TWO WOMEN ALLEGEDLY CAN BE SEEN PASSING DOCUMENTS TO REYES CERNA. SALVADORAN OFFICIALS HAVE COMPLAINED PUBLICLY THAT THE EVIDENCE SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN PRESENTED TO THE MEDIA BEFORE THEY HAVE SEEN IT. VICE FOREIGN MINISTER HECTOR DADA SANCHEZ POLITELY DECLINED THE

HONDURAN FOREIGN MINISTER'S INVITATION TO COME TO HONDURAS  
AND SEE THE ALLEGED PROOF, SAYING HE WANTS IT SENT HERE.  
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