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ACTION ARA-00

RELEASE IN FULL

INFO LOG-00 ADS-00 INR-07 SS-00 IO-19 SSO-00 PM-10
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O 080029Z NOV 89
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3386
INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY MEXICO
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
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CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 01 OF 02 SAN SALVADOR 14550

USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
TAGS: PREL, PHUM, ELAB, PGOV, ES
SUBJECT: A/S ARONSON'S MEETING WITH FENASTRAS

1. ENTIRE TEXT - CONFIDENTIAL.

2. SUMMARY: A/S ARONSON OFFERED HIS PERSONAL AS WELL AS THE USG'S CONDOLENCES TO TWO FENASTRAS REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE OCTOBER 31 BOMBING OF THE PRO-FMLN LABOR ORGANIZATION'S OFFICES IN WHICH 10 PERSONS WERE KILLED. FENASTRAS MEMBERS RECOUNTED THE RESULTS OF THEIR INVESTIGATION OF THE CRIME, AND OFFERED TO PASS INFORMATION TO THE US EMBASSY, BUT REMAINED RELUCTANT TO COOPERATE WITH THE SALVADORAN GOVERNMENT'S INVESTIGATION OF THE INCIDENT. THEY
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ALSO RECOUNTED SEVERAL OTHER INCIDENTS OF HARASSMENT, AND RAISED THEIR SUSPICIONS ABOUT THE CURRENT WHEREABOUTS OF TWO FENASTRAS MEMBERS MISSING SINCE EARLY AUGUST. END SUMMARY.

3. A/S ARONSON, ACCOMPANIED BY THE AMBASSADOR, DCM, POLCOUNS AND ARA/CEN DEPUTY DIRECTOR ROMERO, MET 11/6 WITH FENASTRAS REPRESENTATIVES HUMBERTO RECIOS AND ADALBERTO MARTINEZ AT THE RESIDENCE. ARONSON EXTENDED CONDOLENCES ON BEHALF OF HIMSELF AND THE USG

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Janina Slattery, Senior Reviewer

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TO THE TWO FENASTRAS MEMBERS, NOTING HE WAS SURE THEY HAD LOST FRIENDS AND COWORKERS IN THE OCTOBER 31 EXPLOSION WHICH LEFT 10 DEAD AND 30 WOUNDED. ARONSON NOTED THAT PRESIDENT BUSH HAD PERSONALLY CONDEMNED THE ATTACK, AND ASKED IF FENASTRAS HAD ANY INFORMATION ON THE BOMBING.

4. RECINOS RESPONDED THAT FENASTRAS HAD CONDUCTED ITS OWN INVESTIGATION OF EVENTS, AND HAD LOCATED SIX WITNESSES. ACCORDING TO RECINOS, TWO MEN WEARING WIGS HAD PLACED A LARGE PACKET IN THE AREA BETWEEN THE OUTER GATE (WHICH WAS OPEN) AND THE INNER GARAGE DOOR LEADING TO AN AREA WHICH WAS AT THAT TIME BEING USED AS A SMALL LUNCHROOM. BEFORE ANYONE COULD INTERVENE, THE TWO MEN HAD LEFT IN A CAR WITH POLARIZED WINDOWS, AND THE BOMB HAD EXPLODED, HE CONTINUED. RECINOS ADDED THAT HE FELT THE BOMB WAS DELIBERATELY PLACED DURING THE LUNCH HOUR IN ORDER TO ENSURE A MAXIMUM NUMBER OF FATALITIES AND INJURIES. HE CLAIMED TO HAVE THE LICENSE PLATE NUMBER OF THE CAR.

5. MARTINEZ ADDED THAT THE FENASTRAS NEIGHBORHOOD

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WAS WELL-PATROLLED BY SECURITY FORCES, AND A POLICE STATION WAS THREE BLOCKS AWAY. HE FOUND IT STRANGE THAT ON THIS OCCASION, AS OCCURRED DURING TWO PREVIOUS ATTACKS AGAINST FENASTRAS THIS YEAR, THE POLICE DID NOTHING AND SAW NOTHING. MARTINEZ STATED THAT FENASTRAS PREMISES WERE CONSTANTLY UNDER OBSERVATION BY WHAT HE PRESUMED WERE SECURITY FORCES - THERE WERE ALWAYS ARMED SECURITY FORCES IN THE VICINITY, AND CARS WITH POLARIZED WINDOWS WERE CONSTANTLY PARKED IN THE AREA, HE ALLEGED. FENASTRAS LEADERS WERE FOLLOWED, HE CONTINUED, AND TWO MEMBERS HAD BEEN MISSING FOR AT LEAST THREE MONTHS (REFERRING TO SARA CRISTINA CHAN CHAN AND JUAN FRANCIS MASSIN). PHONE LINES WERE TAPPED, LEADERS WERE THREATENED, HE ENUMERATED. A FENASTRAS CHILD CARE FACILITY HAD BEEN SURROUNDED BY POLICE JUST THAT DAY, RECINOS INTERJECTED. ALL OF THIS, HE CONCLUDED, WAS PART OF A PLAN DIRECTED AGAINST FENASTRAS.

6. ARONSON ASKED WHY FENASTRAS MIGHT BE MORE OF TARGET FOR OFFICIAL INTEREST THAN OTHER LABOR ORGANIZATIONS, SUCH AS THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL UNION OF WORKERS AND PEASANTS (UNOC). RECINOS RESPONDED THAT HE FELT OTHER GROUPS, INCLUDING UNOC, WERE TARGETTED, AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT VIEWED ALL LABOR GROUPS AS COMMUNIST. WHEN PRESSED BY ARONSON, HE CONCEDED THAT FENASTRAS USED VIOLENT TACTICS, BUT

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ARGUED THAT THE LACK OF POLITICAL FREEDOMS LEFT FENASTRAS NO ALTERNATIVES. FOR THE SAME REASON, FENASTRAS SUPPORTED THE FMLN DECISION TO SUSPEND TALKS WITH THE GOES UNTIL A MORE PROPITIOUS CLIMATE HAD DEVELOPED, RECINOS ADDED. ARONSON RESPONDED THAT

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WHILE THERE WERE NO EASY ANSWERS FOR EL SALVADOR, IT WAS CLEAR TO HIM THAT THOSE WHO USE VIOLENCE ON THE RIGHT ARE STRENGTHENED BY THOSE WHO USE VIOLENCE ON THE LEFT.

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7. AMBASSADOR WALKER NOTED THAT HE COULD UNDERSTAND WHY FENASTRAS MIGHT BE SUSPICIOUS OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO INVESTIGATE THE BOMBING, AND COULD ALSO UNDERSTAND WHY THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE DOUBTFUL ABOUT INFORMATION INDEPENDENTLY PRODUCED BY FENASTRAS -- DID FENASTRAS SEE ANY WAY TO HAVE AN INDEPENDENT
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INVESTIGATION WHICH COULD RESOLVE THE KEY QUESTION OF WHO PERPETRATED THE ATTACK? RECINOS SAID HE THOUGHT AN INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION WAS POSSIBLE, BUT NOT BY A COMMISSION WHOSE PRIMARY PURPOSE WAS PROPAGANDA. ARONSON INTERJECTED THAT THERE HAD TO BE A BEGINNING, AND THAT THE FENASTRAS CASE, LIKE THE SAN SEBASTIAN MURDERS, COULD BE A TEST OF THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS.

8. RECINOS SAID THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO CONSULT WITH OTHER FENASTRAS LEADERS BEFORE MAKING ANY COMMITMENT. FENASTRAS WOULD, IN PRINCIPLE, HE SAID, PROBABLY SUPPORT AN INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEE FROM WHICH FENASTRAS, AS WELL AS THE GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY, WOULD BE EXCLUDED. HE OFFERED TO SEND THE RESULTS OF FENASTRAS' INVESTIGATION TO THE EMBASSY, AND INDICATED A WILLINGNESS TO HAVE US EXPERTS EXAMINE THE BOMB SCENE. ARONSON NOTED THAT SUCH EXPERTS WOULD BE WORKING WITH THE GOVERNMENT IN ITS INVESTIGATION, AT WHICH POINT RECINOS SAID AGAIN HE WOULD HAVE TO CHECK WITH OTHER LEADERS.

9. COMMENT: FENASTRAS LEADERS, BEFORE THE MEETING WITH ARONSON, HAD ALREADY DECLINED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE COMMISSION. THE MEETING WITH ARONSON SEEMS TO HAVE CONVINCED THEM OF US SUPPORT FOR A COMPLETE INVESTIGATION, AND MAY PERSUADE THEM TO COOPERATE WITH AN INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION, IF A MECHANISM SATISFACTORY TO BOTH THE GOVERNMENT AND FENASTRAS CAN BE FOUND.

WALKER

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