VZCZCTGI OO RUEEC DE RUEHTG #1122 026 ** ZNY SSSSS ZZH 251926Z JAN 65 FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCICALPA TO SECSTATE WASHDO IMMEDIATE 8547

CLASS: S CHRGE: PROG 21/25/85 APPRV: POL: ABARK DRETD: POL:AFARR CLEAR: AME: JDNEGROFON

DISTR: AMB DCM POL

DAO MILGP SA

Dept. of State, RPS/IPS, Margaret P. Grafeld, Dic

() Release (X) Excise () Deny () Declassify Date 9/12/00 Exemption 31

DECAPTIONED

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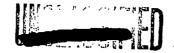
E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR TAGS: PINR, MOPS, HO, NU SINDINISTA FORCES THREATEN FON FORWARD BASE

REF: - ENTIRE TEXT.

THAT THE SANDINISTAS HAVE SUMMARY: MOVED AS MANY AS 2000 TROOPS WITH TWO BM-21 ROCLET LAUNCHERS TO A LOCATION WITHIN 22-25 AILOMETERS OF AN PDN BASE AREA LOCATED JUST INSIDE THE HONDURAN BORDER. FDN HAVE SENT RECONNAISSANCE PARTIES TO DEVELOP BETTER INFORMATION ON THE REPORTED SANDINISTA BUILD-UP AND MOVEMENTS. MEANWHILE, FDN CONBATTANT PRESENCE INSIDE HONDURAS HAS BEEN REDUCED TO 5000 FROM A 7000 LEVEL ONE WEEL AGO AND RECENTLY ARRIVED SUPPLIES, ESPECIALLY AMMUNITION, SHOULD PERMIT A FURTHER REDUCTION OF THAT PRESENCE TO 2000 SOMETIME NEXT WEEK. MEANWHILE, THE REPORTED SANDINISTA BUILD-UP AND THE PROSPECT OF AN ARTILLERY BARRAGE AGAINST THE FDN BASES OF LAS VEGAS AND BANCO GRANDE RAISE THE ISSUE OF THE VIABILITY OF THOSE LOCATIONS AS FDN SANCTUARIES. END SUMMARY.

- REFERENCED MESSAGE DESCRIBES MOVEMENT BY SANDINISTA ARMED FORCES TOWARDS HONDURAN BORDER IN VICINITY OF FON FORWARD BASE AT LAS VEGAS, HONDURAS. MESSAGE REPORTS THAT UP TO 2000 SANDINISTA TROOPS ARE ATTEMPTING TO EMPLACE TWO BM-21 MULTIPLE HOCKET LAUNCEERS WITHIN RANGE OF THE LAS VEGAS BASE. THE BM-21, WITH A MAXIMUM RANGE OF 20.5 KILOMETERS, COULD HIT THE LAS VEGAS BASE FROM POSITIONS INSIDE NICARAGUA.
- 4. MISSION HAS TAKEN STEPS TO REQUEST RECONNAISSANCE SUPPORT TO ATTEMPT TO LOCATE AND ESTIMATE THE SIZE OF SANDINISTA FORCES, ESPECIALLY THE ROCKET LAUNCHERS. WE ALSO NEED A BETTER APPRECIATION OF THE COMPOSITION OF THE SANDINISTA FORCES INVOLVED IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO BETTER ASSESS NICARAGUAN INTENT. MOMENT, WE DOUBT THAT THE SANDINISTAS VOULD ATTEMPT A CROSS BORDER GROUND ATTACK ON LAS VEGAS. RATHER, WE WOULD EXPECT THAT THE BM21S WOULD BE FIRED AT CLOSE





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TO MARIMUM RANGE (HOWEVER INACCURATE) TO CAUSE WHATEVER PRYSICAL DAMAGE TO THE BASE (WHICH INCLUDES PART OF THE FON HOSPITAL) IF POSSIBLE, BUT ALSO TO INFLICT PSYCHOLOGICAL DAMAGE ON THE FON AT A TIME WHEN THE FON IS ALREADY EXPERIENCING CONSIDERABLE DIFFICULTIES.

- 5. THE FDN PRESENTLY HAS CLOSE TO 5000 TROOPS IN THE LAS VEGAS AREA -3560 NEAR LAS VEGAS AND 1500 NEAR THE BORDER AT BANCO GRANDE. SOME 7000 FDN TROOPS WERE IN THE LAS VEGAS AREA RECENTLY, BUT AFTER RESUPPLY, 2000 WENT BACK INTO NICARAGUA. ADDITIONAL SUPPLIES FOR THE TDN HAVE ARRIVED IN HONDURAS, AND WITHIN THE NEXT SEVERAL DAYS, IF THE RESUPPLY EFFORT GOES SMOOTHLY, AN ADDITIONAL 3000 FDN TROOPS COULD GO BACK INTO NICARAGUA. BECAUSE OF LOGISTICS PROBLEMS, WE EXPECT SOME 2000 FDN TROOPS WILL HAVE TO REMAIN IN THE LAS VEGAS AREA INDEFINITELY. THE TROOPS PRESENTLY IN THE LAS VEGAS AREA HAVE DISPERSED AS A PRECAUTION.
- 6. IN THE SHORT TERM, THE FDN WILL ATTEMPT TO DESTROY OR DISABLE THE BM-21S, BUT THEY PROBABLY DO NOT AT THE MOMENT HAVE THE SUPPORT WEAPONS (RPG-7S) TO SUCCESSFULLY ATTACK SANDINISTA ARTILLERY POSITION. IN THE LONGER TERM, THE SANDINISTA MOVEMENT BRINGS INTO QUESTION THE VIABILITY OF LAS VEGAS AS A LOCATION FOR A FORWARD BASE. NEGROPONTE

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