

INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

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By isp, NARA, Date 8-12-91

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- ~~BUDGET~~
- ~~DAVIS~~
- ~~CONRAD~~
- ~~HAMILTON~~
- ~~JESSUP~~
- ~~JOHNSON~~
- ~~JORDAN~~
- ~~KEENE~~
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- ~~MOYERS~~
- ~~TAYLOR~~
- ~~WRIGGINS~~

RUESBA/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
RUESLM/AMEMBASSY LIMA
RUESDO/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
RUKSUA/AMEMBASSY RIO DE JANEIRO
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INFO ZEN/AMCONSUL COCHABAMBA
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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ SECTION 1 OF 2 LA PAZ 2697

SUBJECT: GUERRILLA SITUATION - BOLIVIA

1. GENERAL WILLIAM TOPE, VISITING BOLIVIA TO APPRAISE GUERRILLA SITUATION AND BOL ARMED FORCES REACTION CAPACITY, HAS SENT FOLLOWING EVALUATION

PAGE 2, RUESLZ 007A/1 ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
TELEGRAM TO GENERAL PORTER USCINCSO. I BELIEVE IT AN EXCELLENT DESCRIPTION OF BOLIVIA S INTERNAL SECURITY SITUATION:

2. QTE WEDNESDAY MORNING, APRIL 18, AMB HENDERSON, RAMOS AND MYSELF HAD A THREE-HOUR BREAKFAST MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BARRIENTOS. ALSO PRESENT WERE THE MINISTER OF FINANCE, THE MINISTER OF ECONOMY AND MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO DIEZ DE MEDINA. THE LATTER THREE WERE APPARENTLY SELECTED BY BARRIENTOS TO BE PRESENT BECAUSE OF THE CLOSE ADVISORY ROLE THEY PLAY. THE MEETING WAS CORDIAL BUT MOST FRANK AND OPEN WITH NO PUNCHES PULLED BY EITHER SIDE.

3. QTE BARRIENTOS STARTED THE DISCUSSION WITH A SUMMARY OF THE PRESENT GUERRILLA SITUATION. THE ONLY POINT HE BROUGHT UP WHICH WAS NEW TO US WAS HIS PRESENT VERSION OF HOW IT ALL STARTED. HE STATED THAT ON

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-2- (SECTION ONE OF TWO) LA PAZ 2697, APRIL 22
MARCH 12 SOME INDIANS IN CHUQUISACA DEPT INFORMED HIM

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(APPARENTLY WHILE ON A VISIT) THAT THEY HAD SEEN A GROUP OF BEARDED ARMED MEN IN THE AREA. ON MARCH 13 SOME INDIANS IN ANOTHER LOCATION GAVE HIM A SIMILAR REPORT. ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT THINK THESE GROUPS WERE ORGANIZED GUERRILLAS, BARRIENTOS ORDERED THE ARMY TO INVESTIGATE. THE ESTADO MAYOR APPARENTLY WAS SO SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE REPORTS AND THE NEED FOR ANY ACTION, A VIEW WHICH WAS ALSO SHARED BY THE LOCAL COMMANDER. IT WAS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT PATROLS WERE CONDUCTED, EXTENDING TO FIND AT MOST A BAND OF SMUGGLERS.

4. QTE BARRIENTOS NOW DESCRIBES THE GUERRILLAS A WELL ORGANIZED, HIGHLY TRAINED AND WELL SUPPLIED GROUP WHICH IS EQUIPPED WITH MODERN AUTOMATIC WEAPONS, EXCELLENT MEDICAL KITS AND OTHER MODERN ACCESSORIES. GUERRILLAS HAVE APPARENTLY BEEN ALSO PROVIDED WITH SUFFICIENT FUNDS WHICH, FOR EXAMPLE, ALLOW THEM TO PAY THE LOCAL FARMERS EXHORBITANT PRICES FOR CHICKENS AND OTHER ITEMS THEY PURCHASE. GUERRILLAS OPERATE A GOOD COMMUNICATIONS NET AND ARE AT

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PRESENT MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH SALTA, ARGENTINA; VENEZUELA; AND EVEN CUBA. ACCORDING TO BARRIENTOS, THE GUERRILLA CADRE INFILTRATED INTO THE AREA ACROSS THE ARGENTINE AND PARAGUAYAN BORDERS. INCLUDED WITHIN THE GUERRILLA RANKS ARE SOME DISSAFFECTED URURO MINERS. BAND KNOWS THE AREA WELL AND IS CAPABLE OF SHIFTING POSITIONS RAPIDLY. (THESE ARE ALL DATA GATHERED FROM INTERROGATIONS, BUT WITH LITTLE INDEPENDENT INFORMATION. COUNTRY TEAM CAN ONLY SAY FACTS SEEM TO BE GENERALLY AS STATED.)

5. QTE BARRIENTOS AND HIS MINISTERS REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES THEIR STRONG CONCERN OVER THE POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF RECENT ARMY REVERSES ON THE REST OF THE COUNTRY, PARTICULARLY ON OTHER DISSIDENT GROUPS WHO THEY FEEL ARE JUST WAITING TO STRIKE. AS A RESULT OF THIS OVERRIDING CONCERN THEY FEEL THE ARMY MUST COME UP WITH SOME KIND OF A QUICK SUCCESS AND THEREFORE THEIR ATTENTION IS DEVOTED ALMOST COMPLETELY TO IMMEDIATE SOLUTIONS.

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UNFORTUNATELY, ALL OF THEIR QUICK FIXES ARE UNSOUND, WOULD WASTE PRECIOUS RESOURCES AND PROBABLY GET THEM IN WORSE TROUBLE THAN THEY ALREADY HAVE. SINCE WE HAVE NOT YET FIGURED OUT HOW TO PULL A RABBIT OUT OF THE HAT FOR THEM EITHER, THEY ARE VERY DIFFICULT TO DIVERT FROM THIS LINE OF THINKING.

6. QTE THEY STRESSED THAT BECAUSE OF THE INCREASED THREAT POTENTIAL ELSEWHERE IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO MOVE EXISTING BETTER TRAINED AND EQUIPPED UNITS FROM OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. SO FAR WE TENTATIVELY AGREE WITH THEM ON THIS. THEY HAVE TAKEN ABOUT 100 NCO'S FROM THE NCO SCHOOL AND THE THIRD YEAR CADETS FROM THE MILITARY ACADEMY AND SENT THEM TO THE AREA. IT WAS UNCLEAR AS TO HOW THEY WERE TO BE UTILIZED. WHEN QUERIED ABOUT THE USE OF INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE RECEIVED COUNTER-INSURGENCY TRAINING FROM US IN THE PAST, BARRIENTOS STATED THEY HAD ALREADY IDENTIFIED SOME AND SENT THEM TO THE AREA. WE ASKED HIM ABOUT RECALLING RESERVISTS. HIS RESPONSE WAS THAT EXCEPT FOR

PABBESLZ 007A/1 ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
A FEW THAT HAD GONE BACK INTO AGRICULTURE MOST OF THEM WERE DISCONTENTED AND HAD JOINED DISSIDENT GROUPS, MAKING THEM UNRELIABLE. FROM HIS TONE IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT IT WAS FUTILE TO TRY TO PURSUE THAT SUBJECT FURTHER.

7. QTE AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, ALL THE PROPOSED BOLIVIAN PANACEAS TO THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM CENTERED AROUND EQUIPMENT. THE FIRST SUBJECT BROUGHT UP WAS THE NEED FOR TWO HILLER TURBO PORTER AIRCRAFT. THE ARGUMENT CENTERED ON THE NEED FOR A QUICK REACTION AIR SUPPORT CAPABILITY IN THE FORWARD AREA AND THE LACK OF ANY AIRFIELDS SUITABLE FOR EVEN A CESSNA 185. HOW THIS QUICK REACTION CAPABILITY, WOULD BE EMPLOYED WAS UNCLEAR.

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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ SECTION 2 OF 2 LA PAZ 2697

SUBJECT: GUERRILLA SITUATION - BOLIVIA

8. QTE THE NEXT MAJOR POINT WHICH WAS BROUGHT UP REPEATEDLY WAS THE REPLACEMENT OF OLD, NON-FUNCTIONING MAUSERS WITH QTE AUTOMATIC WEAPONS UNQTE. THIS WOULD ENHANCE THE MORALE AND CONFIDENCE OF THE SOLDIERS AND SHOW THE COUNTRY THAT POSITIVE STEPS WERE BEING TAKEN. THE MOTIONS THAT ACCOMPANIED THE TERM AUTOMATIC WEAPONS INDICATED THAT THE CONCEPT WAS TO FILL THE AIR WITH LEAD IN ANY SUSPECTED AREAS.

9. QTE THE BASIC INITIAL POINT WHICH I MADE TO THE BOLIVIANS WAS THAT EFFECTIVE MILITARY EFFORT WAS DEPENDENT ON MANY INTERRELATED FACTORS, ALL OF WHICH HAD TO BE CONSIDERED TOGETHER. THIS REQUIRED A COORDINATED EFFORT ON EVERYONE'S PART TO INSURE THAT EVERY KEY ELEMENT WAS COVERED. FAILURE TO PROVIDE ANY ONE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT, WHETHER IT BE TRAINING, EQUIPMENT, RATIONS, COMMUNICATIONS, MAINTENANCE, POL, ETC., WOULD BRING FAILURE TO THE ENTIRE EFFORT REGARDLESS OF HOW WELL WE TOOK CARE OF OTHER ELEMENTS. THE PITCH WAS THAT A MODERN WEAPON WAS OF NO USE IN THE HANDS OF AN UNTRAINED SOLDIER, EQUIPMENT WAS USELESS WITHOUT MAINTENANCE, ETC. ALL NEEDED VIGOROUS AGREEMENT WITH THIS LITTLE

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SPEECH BUT SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSION FROM THE SUBJECTS THEY BROUGHT UP INDICATED EITHER A COMPLETE LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF THIS PRINCIPLE OR A LACK OF DESIRE TO FOLLOW IT OR BOTH. I SUSPECT THE LATTER IS TRUE. AT THIS POINT I FEEL THIS IS OUR MAJOR STUMBLING BLOCK TO PROGRESS AND BEFORE WE ARE FINISHED MAY REQUIRE SOME VERY *FIRM* APPROACHES USING ALL THE LEVERAGE WE HAVE TO FORCE THEM TO DO THE THINGS WHICH ARE ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY.

10. QTE ON THE SPECIFIC SUBJECTS THEY MENTIONED

WE TOOK THE FOLLOWING POSITIONS. WITH REGARD TO THE MOVEMENT OF INDIVIDUALS, THIS WAS USELESS UNLESS ACCOMPANIED BY THE DEVELOPMENT OF UNIT INTEGRITY AND UNIT TRAINING. ON THE HILLER TURBO PORTERNY AIRCRAFT, IT IS TOO EXPENSIVE FOR THE LIMITED INCREASED CAPABILITY, HAS AN ENGINE FOR WHICH THEY COMPLETELY LACK ANY CAPABILITY TO MAINTAIN, WOULD ADD A NEW TYPE WHEN THEY HAD TOO MANY ALREADY, AND THE EFFORT WOULD BE MUCH MORE PRODUCTIVE IF DEVOTED TO IMPROVED MAINTENANCE AND UTILIZATION OF WHAT THEY NOW HAVE. I POINTED OUT THAT WE ARE NOT USING THIS AIRCRAFT AND ARE MAKING GREAT USE OF C-47'S IN SIMILAR SITUATIONS IN VIET-NAM AND OTHER AREAS. ON THE IDEA OF QUICKLY GIVING MODERN WEAPONS TO THE SOLDIERS NOW IN THE FIELD, I STATED THAT THIS IS USELESS UNLESS THEY WERE THOROUGHLY TRAINED IN THEIR USE AND MAINTENANCE AND WERE IN UNITS WELL TRAINED IN COUNTER-GUERRILLA TACTICS. I POINTED OUT THAT A FRIGHTENED, INTRAINED CONSCRIPT WILL DROP A MODERN WEAPON JUST AS QUICKLY AS HE WITH A MAUSER.

11. QTE THIS LATTER POINT ILLUSTRATES THE MAGNITUDE OF OUR TASK AT THE HIGHER LEVEL. IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO SHAKE THEM FROM THEIR CONVICTION THAT MERELY HANDING THEM A NEW WEAPON WITH A HIGH VOLUME OF FIRE WOULD MAKE THEIR SOLDIERS EIGHT FEET TALL FROM THE MORALE BOOST ALONE.

12. QTE IN SUMMARY THESE PEOPLE HAVE A TREMENDOUS PROBLEM BUT WE ARE GOING TO HAVE GREAT DIFFICULTY IN GETTING TOGETHER ON EVEN HOW TO APPROACH IT MUCH LESS FIND A SOLUTION. IT IS OBVIOUS WE MUST TAKE A PRACTICAL, PRAGMATIC APPROACH, BUILDING ON WHAT THEY NOW HAVE, FORCING IMPROVEMENTS TOWARD SOUND OBJECTIVES, ASSISTING ALL WE CAN WHEN THAT IS THE GOAL, AND PREVENTING THE WASTE OF EITHER US OR BOLIVIAN RESOURCES WHEN IT IS NOT.

13. QTE HENDERSON AGREES UNQTE.

3P-A. HENDERSON (

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