

PRIORITY

SECRET

INCOMING



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ACTION MODS-00

INFO LOG-00 ADS-00 /000W

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P 192332Z FEB 91

FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5254

S E C R E T SAN SALVADOR 02156

MODIS

FOR P - U/S KIMMITT EYES ONLY

FOR ARA/EX - A/S ARONSON EYES ONLY

E.O. 12356. DECL. OADR

TAGS: PREL, ES

SUBJECT: THE ESAF AND THE JESUIT CASE: REACHING THE
- END OF THE ROPE

ER
7-26-93

REF: A. SULLIVAN/WALKER TELCON 2/9
- B. ARONSON/CRISTIANI TELCON 2/15

1. SECRET - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: DESPITE ADVANCEMENTS IN OTHER AREAS, ON THE JESUIT CASE THE ESAF REMAINS COMMITTED TO A HERMETIC CONSPIRACY TO PROTECT ITS OWN AT WHATEVER COST. USG PLEAS, THREATS, TURNING ON AND OFF THE MILITARY ASSISTANCE SPIGOT, AND APPEALS TO INSTITUTIONAL HONOR HAVE ALL HAD THE SAME RESULTS - ZILCH. WE HAVE MADE ENOUGH DEMARCHES AND ARGUMENTS - OUR POSITION IS CLEAR TO THE ESAF. I RELUCTANTLY CONCLUDE MOD POMCE IS A FATALY FLAWED LEADER. ABSENT IMMEDIATE TURN-AROUND, AND DESPITE THE DOWNSIDES, I RECOMMEND THAT THE GOES BE INFORMED THAT WE WILL NOT MOVE ON THEIR PENDING REQUESTS

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 FOR COBRA HELICOPTERS, ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS, AND
 WILL SUPPORT HEAVY CONDITIONING OF FY92 MILITARY
 ASSISTANCE UNLESS AND UNTIL PONCE IS REMOVED AND A NEW
 LEADERSHIP SOLVES THE JESUIT AFFAIR. END SUMMARY.

3. WE HAVE TRIED CARROTS AND STICKS, USED PRAGMATIC
 ARGUMENTS, APPEALS TO MILITARY HONOR AND PATRIOTISM. WE
 HAVE SENT A VARIETY OF DIRECT AND NUANCED MESSAGES,
 DELIVERED BY CONGRESSIONAL FRIENDS AND CRITICS,
 ADMINISTRATION HEAVYWEIGHTS AND MILITARY COLLEAGUES.
 EVERY COMBINATION HAS FAILED TO CONVINCE THE ESAF TO
 TAKE THE INTERNAL MEASURES WHICH WOULD REVEAL WHAT
 HAPPENED NOVEMBER 15-16, 1989 AND IDENTIFY ALL WHO WERE
 INVOLVED. NEITHER THE SUSPENSION OF MILITARY
 ASSISTANCE, NOR ITS REINSTATEMENT HAS RESULTED IN ESAF
 ACCEPTANCE OF THE NEED FOR ACCOUNTABILITY.

4. IN THE 12 MONTHS SINCE ESAF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE
 MURDERS WAS REVEALED, THE MILITARY'S LEADERSHIP HAS
 RESISTED ALL APPEAL FOR AN HONEST ACCOUNTING OF WHAT
 MUST HAVE POSSESSED FROM THE BEGINNING - THE TRUTH.
 ALL THESE MONTHS, THE ESAF CANNOT TAKE CREDIT FOR THE
 EMERGENCE OF ONE NEW FACT, ONE SCRAP OF INCRIMINATING
 INFORMATION.

5. GENERAL PONCE WAS ELEVATED TO THE MINISTERSHIP SIX
 MONTHS AGO. AT THAT TIME, I AND OTHERS CONVEYED A BL
 MESSAGE - "THE USG EXPECTS YOU TO USE ALL THE POWERS OF
 THIS OFFICE IN VIGOROUS PURSUIT OF JUSTICE IN THE JESUIT
 CASE. WE WILL BE SATISFIED WITH NOTHING LESS."
 SUBSEQUENTLY THE EMBASSY SUPPLIED PONCE WITH LISTS OF
 ISSUES AND QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED; WE CALLED THE
 LISTS OF OTHERS TO HIS ATTENTION. I HAVE YET TO RECEIVE
 A RESPONSE FROM PONCE TO ANY OF THESE QUERIES. NOR HAS
 HE SOUGHT ME OUT TO EXPLAIN WHAT HE AND/OR THE ESAF HIGH
 COMMAND PLAN TO DO TO DISARM THE CRITICS OR MOVE THE
 INVESTIGATION.

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EI Salvador SP Date 8-23-93



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6. TOLD THAT THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION, THE CONGRESS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE AISLE, AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE CONTINUE TO DEMAND JUSTICE AND AN END TO OBFUSCATION, THE ESAF CONCLUDES THAT THE SALVADORAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON IS NOT DOING AN EFFECTIVE PUBLIC RELATIONS JOB, THAT CISPES IS BEHIND ALL THE BAD NEWS, ETC. THERE IS NO ACCEPTANCE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY, AND A TACIT BELIEF THAT BY OFFERING UP BEHAVIDES FOR TRIAL THE ESAF HAS DONE ENOUGH.

7. RECENT EVENTS -- THE DOWNING OF OUR HUEY AND F4M ASSASSINATION OF U.S. SERVICEMEN, THE REINSTATEMENT OF THE FY91 MILITARY ASSISTANCE, THE ELEVATION OF PONCE, ZEPEDA AND RUBIO TO THE RANK OF GENERAL -- HAVE ALL WORKED AGAINST US. HAVING SURVIVED ONE ROUND OF CONDITIONING, THE ESAF APPROACHES THE UPCOMING FY92 DEBATE WITH COMPLACENCY, SMUG IN THE CONVICTION THAT THE USG WILL NEVER PULL THE PLUG. WE MUST RADICALLY ALTER THAT PERCEPTION.

8. IN MY MIND THE EVIDENCE IS OVERWHELMING, CONSISTENT AND PROFOUNDLY DISTURBING. THIS ARMED FORCE, UNDER THIS LEADERSHIP, IS EITHER UNWILLING OR UNABLE TO UNDERSTAND THE MEANING, THE CONSEQUENCES OF ITS ROLE IN THE JESUIT CASE.

9. I RELUCTANTLY CONCLUDE THAT WE CANNOT GET FROM HERE TO WHERE WE MUST GO WITH THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP. IF THE PAST FOURTEEN MONTHS HAVE NOT CONVINCED THIS GENERATION OF ESAF LEADERS OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE PROBLEM, THE NECESSITY OF FULL DISCLOSURE, I DOUBT THE MESSAGE WILL EVER GET THROUGH. FACED WITH THIS, I SEE ONLY TWO REAL CHOICES - ADMIT DEFEAT AND ATTEMPT TO MOVE ON TO OTHER MATTERS, OR PULL THE PLUG, I.E., DEMAND A NEW LEADERSHIP WITH A CLEARER UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT THEY, AND WE FACE. I OPT FOR THE SECOND OPTION.



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10. I DID NOT REACH THIS CONCLUSION HASTILY, NOR FROM FRUSTRATION AND ANGER. I RATHER LIKE PONCE. BUT HIS STYLE OF LEADERSHIP, DEVELOPED OVER TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AT THE HELM OF THE TANDONA, COMBINED WITH THE TIGHTNESS OF THE SITUATION HE FINDS HIMSELF IN, MAKES FOR A LEADER WHO IS NOT LEADING, A CONSENSUS FOLLOWER IN A GROUP WHOSE ONLY CONSENSUS IS TO PROTECT ITS NARROW INTERESTS. PONCE HAS REACHED THE PINNACLE OF HIS CAREER A HANDICAPPED, PERHAPS FATALLY FLAWED MINISTER. THAT HE HAS NOT TRIED TO EXTRICATE HIMSELF FROM THE CRIPPLING DEBILITIES OF HIS PEER GROUP INDICATES, TO ME, THAT HE IS NOT THE LEADER WE HOPED FOR, NOR THE COMMANDER THAT THE ESAF MUST HAVE IF IT, AND OUR POLICY ARE TO MAKE IT THROUGH THE JESUIT MESS.

11. I BELIEVE THAT WE MUST BEGIN TO POSITION OURSELVES FOR THE REMOVAL OF PONCE, AND POSSIBLY OTHERS OF THE PRESENT HIGH COMMAND, IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THEN THE APPALLING MISHANDLING OF THE JESUIT INVESTIGATION, AND THE HARM THAT HIS MISMANAGEMENT HAS INFLICTED ON THE INSTITUTION, THE GOVERNMENT IT SERVES, AND OUR POLICY.

12. I RECOGNIZE THE RISKS INHERENT IN DECAPITATING AN ARMED FORCE IN THE MIST OF A WAR, AS THE ESAF SHOWS AN INCREASINGLY POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE PEACE PROCESS, AND WITH THE POSSIBILITY THAT THOSE REPLACING PONCE ET AL MIGHT BE NO BETTER, OR WORSE. GIVEN WHAT WE FACE, I BELIEVE THOSE ARE RISKS THAT MUST BE TAKEN.

13. I HAVE DISCUSSED THIS WITH THE COUNTRY TEAM WHICH CONCURS THAT THE TIME FOR EMPTY THREATS HAS PASSED -- WE MUST TAKE ACTIONS AND INFORM THE ESAF/GOES THAT WHAT IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN IS THE DIRECT CONSEQUENCE OF ESAF AND PONCE'S FAILURE TO PERFORM ON THE JESUIT CASE. OUR ACTIONS SHOULD BE SUCH THAT THE LOWER RANKS UNDERSTAND WHAT IS HAPPENING, AND PRESSURE THE HIGH COMMAND TO MOVE

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14. I RECOMMEND SOMETHING ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES, INTENDED TO STIMULATE CREATIVE DISCUSSION WHAT I SUGGEST UNDOUBTEDLY WILL HAVE UNFORESEEN, UNPREDICTABLE CONSEQUENCES. BUT CONTINUED PURSUIT OF THE PRESENT TRACK, OR MOVING TO OPTION ONE, INVOLVES GREATER RISK

15. I RECOMMEND THAT I BE INSTRUCTED TO INFORM PRESIDENT CRISTIANI THAT, ABSENT DRAMATIC EFFORT, WITH IMMEDIATE RESULTS, TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THE JESUIT AFFAIR

-- WE ARE UNABLE TO REACT FAVORABLY TO THE RECENT GOES REQUEST FOR COBRA HELICOPTERS,

-- WE HAVE FROZEN THE ESAF REQUEST FOR ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS (KNOWN TO BE PONCE'S HIGHEST PRIORITY);

-- WE WILL REVIEW ALL PENDING ASSISTANCE REQUESTS TO IDENTIFY THOSE WHICH CAN BE FROZEN WITHOUT IMPERILING PRESENT ESAF EFFECTIVENESS TO DEFEND ITSELF;

-- IN THE CONTEXT OF CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY WHICH WE UNDERSTAND BEGINS IN EARLY MARCH, WE WILL RECOMMEND HEAVY, RIGID CONDITIONING BE PLACED ON THE FY92 MILITARY ASSISTANCE, CONDITIONS DEPENDENT ON RESOLUTION OF THE JESUIT CASE.

-- WE RECOMMEND THAT, IF THE ESAF CONTINUES TO MISS THE POINT AND NOT TAKE IMMEDIATE REMEDIAL ACTION, PONCE BE DISMISSED.

16. I ACCEPT THAT IMPLEMENTATION OF ABOVE COULD UNDERCUT MILITARY STABILITY AND FLEXIBILITY IN THE

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PRESENT NEGOTIATION PROCESS, AND PUT AT RISK WHAT IS OUR
MAJOR POLICY OBJECTIVE - THE ARRIVAL OF PEACE. WHAT THE
COUNTRY TEAM HAS DISCUSSED, AND HOPES WASHINGTON WILL
ANALYZE IS THE DILEMMA OF PURSUING TWO OBJECTIVES WHEN,
AT THIS MOMENT, THEY ARE ESSENTIALLY INCOMPATIBLE.

WALKER

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