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Department of State

TELEGRAM

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ACTION ARA-16

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 HA-06 INRE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10
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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1212

S E C R E T SAN SALVADOR 08084
E.O. 12065: RDS-4 11/18/90
TAGS: SHUM, PIMS, PINT, PINN, ES
SUBJECT: (S) CONVERSATION WITH NATIONAL GUARD OFFICER

1. (S- ENTIRE TEXT)
2. POLOFF SPOKE WITH A LOW-RANKING NATIONAL GUARD OFFICER NOVEMBER 18. THIS IS A SOURCE WHOM POLOFF HAD NEVER MET BEFORE AND WHOSE RELIABILITY CANNOT BE JUDGED. SOME OF HIS COMMENTS FOLLOW.
3. ASSASSINATION OF MONSIGNOR ROMERO. THE SOURCE TOLD POLOFF THAT HE PARTICIPATED IN A MEETING DURING WHICH THE ASSASSINATION OF ARCHBISHOP ROMERO WAS PLANNED. HE INDICATED THAT MAJOR ROBERTO D'AUBUISSON WAS IN CHARGE OF THE MEETING AND THAT IT TOOK PLACE SHORTLY -- A DAY OR TWO -- BEFORE ROMERO WAS ASSASSINATED. ACCORDING TO THE SOURCE, THE PARTICIPANTS DREW LOTS FOR THE TASK OF KILLING THE ARCHBISHOP. THE "WINNER" WAS AN EX-NATIONAL GUARDSMAN WHO, SAID THE SOURCE, NOW LIVES IN CIUDAD DELGADO. THE OFFICER SAID THAT THE CART- RIDGE USED IN THE ASSASSINATION WAS HIS OWN.
4. THE RIGHT AND RIGHTIST KILLINGS. THE SOURCE SAID THAT HE WAS A PERSONAL FRIEND OF MAJOR D'AUBUISSON AND THAT D'AUBUISSON HAS ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS TRIED TO CONVINCE THE SOURCE TO JOIN HIM -- D'AUBUISSON -- IN GUATEMALA. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE WOULD NEVER DO THAT BECAUSE D'AUBUISSON HAD SOLD HIMSELF TO THE "CAPITALISTS". HE SAID THAT D'AUBUISSON HAS NO BACKING WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES BECAUSE OF HIS SELL-OUT. THE RIGHT, CLAIMED

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THE SOURCE, NO LONGER HAS ANY REAL LEVERAGE IN EL SALVADOR

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 Declassified under EO 12356 (X) in full; () in part;
 portions withheld: classified (); deliberative ();
 law enforcement (); privacy (), statutory ();
 not relevant to El Salvador ().

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BECAUSE IT IS VIEWED AS BEING MADE UP OF WEALTHY PEOPLE WHO FLED WHEN THE SITUATION HERE BECAME DIFFICULT AND LEFT THE MILITARY TO FACE THE LEFTIST THREAT ALONE. HE SAID THAT THE MINISTRY WILL NEVER AGAIN SERVE AS A "TRAMPOLINE" FOR THOSE MONIED INTERESTS.

5. THE SOURCE CONTINUED BY SAYING THAT THE KILLINGS GOING ON NOW THAT ARE ATTRIBUTED TO THE RIGHT ARE DONE BY THE GUARDSMEN AND POLICE. THE DEATH SQUADRON, FOR EXAMPLE, IS MADE UP OF SECURITY FORCES MEMBERS WHO LEAVE DEATH SQUADRON PLACARDS BY THEIR VICTIMS SO THAT THEIR KILLINGS CANNOT BE ATTRIBUTED TO THEM. HE USED AS AN EXAMPLE THE KILLINGS OF THREE "KIDS" WHO HAD BEEN CAPTURED IN THE AREA UNDER HIS COMMAND. AT FIRST HE HAD CONSIDERED SETTING THEM FREE BUT AFTER HAVING BEEN TOLD BY A SERGEANT THAT THE THREE WERE UNREFORMED HE HAD HAD THEM KILLED. SHOULD THERE BE ANY INQUIRIES INTO THOSE DEATHS BY HIGHER RANKING OFFICERS HE WOULD, HE SAID, SIMPLY SAY THAT HE KNEW NOTHING ABOUT THEM. HE SAID THAT IN SAN SALVADOR HE HAD PARTICIPATED IN UNAUTHORIZED OPERATIONS AGAINST SUPPOSED LEFTISTS. HIS PARTICIPATION WAS MOTIVATED BY THE RECENT KILLING OF HIS BROTHER, ALSO A MILITARY OFFICER, AND OF HIS FATHER IN MAY 1979, BOTH BY THE LEFT. HE HAD ALSO, HE SAID, KILLED SEVERAL OTHER PEOPLE WHO HAD BEEN FOUND NEAR ONE OF THE HOUSES HE USES TO HIDE OUT (HE IS ON A FARN DEATH LIST) SIMPLY BECAUSE HE SUSPECTED THEM OF PRESENTING A THREAT TO HIM. ASKED HOW HE KNEW THAT THEY PRESENTED A THREAT, HE SAID THAT HE COULD NOT BE SURE; IF NOT, HE "WOULD HAVE MADE A MISTAKE."

6. COLONEL MAJANO. THE SOURCE DISPLAYED AN INTENSE HATRED FOR COLONEL MAJANO AND SAID THAT HIS OWN ATTITUDE WAS PREVALENT THROUGHOUT THE ARMED FORCES. MAJANO, HE SAID, WAS NOT WORKING WITH THE ARMED FORCES BUT AGAINST THEM. MAJANO IS, CLAIMED THE SOURCE, A TRAITOR TO THE COUNTRY WHO SHOULD BE
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KILLED. IN FACT, IF HE WERE TO BE TASKED WITH KILLING MAJANO HE WOULD DO SO. HE TOLD POLOFF TO "REMEMBER MY WORDS"; MAJANO WILL BE KILLED AND BY THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT ITSELF. IT DIDN'T MATTER TO HIM WHO TOOK COMMAND FOLLOWING MAJANO'S DEATH; HE SAID, "DUARTE, MORALES EHRlich, GUTIERREZ, IT DOESN'T MATTER TO ME WHO TAKES OVER JUST AS LONG AS MAJANO IS REMOVED." IF MAJANO IS NOT REMOVED BY DECEMBER 20, HE SAID, THE WHOLE JUNTA WILL BE OVERTURNED. HE CLAIMED THAT THE MILITARY IS UNITED AGAINST MAJANO AND THAT IF SOMETHING IS NOT DONE TO ELIMINATE HIM ALL OF THE JUNTA MEMBERS WILL SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES. ASKED WHY

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DECEMBER 20 WAS SIGNIFICANT, HE SAID THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO DEMONSTRATE A NEW RESOLVE BEFORE THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION TAKES OFFICE IN THE UNITED STATES.

7. COMMENT: THE SOURCE IS A BADLY EDUCATED INDIVIDUAL WHO WAS AN ENLISTED MAN FOR MOST OF HIS GM CAREER AND NEVER GRADUATED FROM THE MILITARY ACADEMY. HE INDICATED THAT HE HAD WORKED CLOSELY WITH GENERAL MEDRAMO AS A NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER; HE LOST HIS MENTOR IN THE GUARD WHEN MEDRAMO WAS OUSTED. DESPITE HIS ASCENDANCE IN RANK POLOFF BELIEVES THAT HE HAS BEEN SOMETHING RESEMBLING A PARIAH IN THE GUARD UNDER MEDRAMO'S SUCCESSORS. HE USED EXPLETIVES TO DESCRIBE THE CURRENT LEADERSHIP IN THE GUARD, RIDICULING ITS PASSIVITY IN DEALING WITH THE CURRENT SITUATION AND POINTING OUT SEVERAL TIMES THAT IT WAS THE STRICTURES PLACED ON THE GUARD IN THE FIELD THAT FORCED HIM AND OTHER LIKE-MINDED SECURITY CORPS MEMBERS TO CLANDESTINELY CARRY OUT THEIR BRUTAL ACTIVITIES. THIS IS, IN SHORT, A SAVAGE INDIVIDUAL WHO FEELS VICTIMIZED BOTH BY THE LEFT AND BY THE GM HIERARCHY. GIVEN THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES WE DOUBT WHETHER HE IS REALLY IN A POSITION TO KNOW THE PLANS FOR A COUP AGAINST THE JRG. WE SUSPECT THAT THE DECEMBER 20 DATE REPRESENTS MORE HIS HOPE THAN IT DOES ACCURATE INFORMATION. AS FAR AS HIS PARTICIPATION IN BRUTAL ACTIVITIES IS CONCERNED, POLOFF BELIEVES THAT THE SOURCE WAS TELLING THE TRUTH.

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