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      L-03  LAB-04  TRSE-00  PM-10  PA-01  MCT-03  OMB-01
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ROME FOR THE VATICAN

E.O. 12356 DECL: OADR
TAGS: PINR, PINS, PREL, SHUM, SOCI, GT
SUBJ: MUTUAL SUPPORT GROUP (GAM) UPDATE

REF: (A) GUATEMALA 3217 (B) GUATEMALA 3229

SUMMARY
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(U)
THE GUATEMALAN NEWS MEDIA HAS CARRIED COMMENTS FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES ON THE DEATH OF MARIA GODAY DE CUEVAS (GUATEMALA 3229). ANOTHER NEWS ARTICLE SPOKE OF A SENSE OF THREAT FELT BY GAM MEMBERS. THE MUTUAL SUPPORT GROUP HAS ALSO ANNOUNCED PLANS FOR A PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION ON APRIL 13 IN GUATEMALA CITY.

END SUMMARY

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GUATEMALAN REACTION TO THE DEATH OF MRS. MARIA

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1.(U) ON APRIL 7, THE TELE-PRENSA TELEVISION NEWS PROGRAM INTERVIEWED MRS. CUEVAS' MOTHER. SHE GAVE ONLY A GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF EVENTS AND DID NOT OFFER AN OPINION ON THE CAUSE OF DEATH OF HER FAMILY MEMBERS.

(U)
ON THE SAME BROADCAST ARCHBISHOP PROSPERO PENADOS SAID THAT THE RECENT EVENTS, INCLUDING THE CUEVAS DEATHS, HAD GIVEN GUATEMALA A BAD IMAGE. HE SAID THE EVENTS HAD CONTRIBUTED TO A "HOLY WEEK OF SHAME AND FEAR" IN GUATEMALA. THE ARCHBISHOP SPOKE OF THE DEATH OF THE CUEVAS FAMILY AS A "BLOODY ACT", BUT WAS NOT MORE SPECIFIC.

COMMENT
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END COMMENT.

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3.(U) ON THE SAME TELE-PRENSA BROADCAST, MARIO RAMIREZ RUIZ, SPOKESMAN FOR THE GUATEMALAN NATIONAL POLICE, SAID THAT POLICE FORENSIC SPECIALISTS HAD DETERMINED THAT THE CAUSE OF DEATH OF THE CUEVAS FAMILY WAS TRAUMA DUE TO THE AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT.

COMMENT
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(C)
THE MATTER OF THE CUEVAS AUTOPSY IS UNCLEAR. EMBASSY WAS TOLD (GUATEMALA 3229), THAT NO AUTOPSY HAD BEEN PERFORMED AT THE REQUEST OF THE CUEVAS FAMILY.
IT IS UNCLEAR WHAT EXAMINATION WAS COMPLETED BY 
"POLICE FORENSIC SPECIALISTS". AN EMBASSY SOURCE 
SAID HE HAD HEARD THAT THE VICTIMS HAD DIED OF 
ASPHYXIATION AND THAT A "BOGUS AUTOPSY" HAD BEEN 
PERFORMED. HE HAD NO DETAILS. ANOTHER RUMOR CIRCU- 
LATING SAID THAT THE VICTIMS HAD DIED FROM GUNFIRE. 
BUT AGAIN NO DETAILS OR PROOFS HAVE BEEN OFFERED. 
END COMMENT.

4(U) IN THE APRIL 9 GUATEMALAN PRESS, GOG SECRETARY 
OF PUBLIC RELATIONS, RAMON ZELADA CARRILLO, SAID THAT 
WITHOUT AN INVESTIGATION THE CASES COULD NOT BE 
CONSIDERED ASSASSINATIONS AND THAT HE BELIEVED THE 
GOG WOULD SOON BE ABLE TO SHOW THAT THE DEATHS WERE 
THE RESULT OF A TRAFFIC ACCIDENT.

5(U) GUSTAVO ADOLFO SANDOVAL, GOG MINISTER OF GOVERN- 
MENT, SAID HE HAD THE OFFICIAL REPORT THAT SHOWED THE 
CUEVAS CASE TO HAVE BEEN AN ACCIDENT. SANDOVAL SAID 
THE INFORMATION WAS IN THE HANDS OF A GUATEMALAN JUDGE
WHO HAD THE AUTHORITY TO OPEN FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS
IF HE FELT IT TO BE NECESSARY. THE MINISTER SAID IT
WAS UNJUST TO CALL THE CUEVAS DEATHS MURDERS, WHEN
THE OFFICIAL REPORT HAD SHOWN THAT TO NOT HAVE BEEN
THE CASE. HE ASKED RHECTORICALLY OF WHAT BENEFIT
WOULD IT HAVE BEEN TO THE GOG TO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED
IN SUCH AN ACT WHEN IT HAS BEEN THE POLICY OF THE
MEJIA GOVERNMENT TO PROMOTE THE OPENING FOR
DEMOCRACY?

6(U) DANILIO PARINELLO, A SPOKESMAN FOR THE AUTHENTIC
NATIONALIST CENTER (CAN), A RIGHTIST POLITICAL PARTY,
SPOKE OF THE DEATHS IN THE SAME NEWSPAPER EDITION.
HE SAID THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT OF GUATEMALA HAS
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ELEVATED THE INTERNATIONAL IMAGE OF THE COUNTRY DURING
THE LAST THREE YEARS AND NOW GUERRILLA GROUPS WANT
TO BLAME THE GOG FOR ALL THE BAD THAT OCCURS IN
ORDER TO DISCREDIT THE MILITARY REGIME. PARINELLO
SAID THE DEATHS WERE OF BENEFIT TO "THOSE WHO WISH
TO INTERRUPT THE ELECTORAL PROCESS AND TO CREATE AN
ENVIRONMENT THAT COULD ALLOW A POPULAR INSURRECTION
OR EVEN ANOTHER COUP D'ETAT".

7(U) CONFREGUA, THE GUATEMALAN CONFERENCE OF MEMBERS
OF CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS ORDERS, SPONSORED A NEWSPAPER
ANNOUNCEMENT ON APRIL 9 IN WHICH IT EXPRESSED SOLIDARITY
WITH THE GAM AND SAID THAT IT "CONDEMNE ALL OPERATIONS
AGAINST THE STRUCTURE AND WORK OF THE GAM".
REPORT OF SENSE OF THREAT TO GAM MEMBERS

8(U) EMBASSY REPORTED (GUATEMALA 3217), THAT GAM MEMBERS HAD RECENTLY BEGUN TO RECEIVE ANONYMOUS THREATS BY LETTER AND TELEPHONE. ANOTHER ARTICLE, CARRIED MARCH 30 IN LA RAZON, A GUATEMALAN DAILY NEWSPAPER, ALSO SPOKE OF THE ANONYMOUS THREATS AND IDENTIFIED THE GOVERNMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF GUATEMALA, THE REGION OF GUATEMALA CITY, AS "AN OFFICIAL SECTOR THAT HAD LAUNCHED STERN WARNINGS TO INHIBIT THE ORGANIZATION FROM CONTINUING ITS PROTESTS". THE ARTICLE EXPLAINED THAT THE "STERN WARNINGS" REFERRED TO GOG NOTICE TO THE GAM THAT THE GROUP MEMBERS WOULD BE FACED WITH ARREST IF THEY PERSISTED IN HAVING RALLIES WITHOUT HAVING ADVISED THE APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES.

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COMMENT

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(C)
ON APRIL 8 A SOURCE TOLD POLOFF THAT IN THE LAST FEW DAYS GAM MEMBERS HAD NOT FELT THAT THEY WERE BEING WATCHED OR FOLLOWED. END COMMENT.

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GAM ANNOUNCES PLANS FOR A "PUBLIC MANIFESTATION"

9(C) ON APRIL 8 THE GUATEMALAN PRESS CARRIED A GAM ANNOUNCEMENT FOR A "PUBLIC MANIFESTATION" TO BE HELD IN THE CENTRAL PART OF GUATEMALA CITY ON APRIL 13. A MARCH, ENDING AT THE NATIONAL PALACE, IS PLANNED. POLOFF WAS TOLD BY A PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL (PBI) MEMBER ON APRIL 5 THAT THE ROUTE, AND THE FORM, OF THE EVENT HAD BEEN APPROVED BY THE GOG. POLOFF WAS TOLD THAT ADDITIONAL PBI MEMBERS INTEND TO ARRIVE IN GUATEMALA TO AID IN THE DEMONSTRATION.

COMMENT

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(C)
ON APRIL 8 POLOFFS WERE TO HAVE MET WITH BOARD
MEMBERS OF GAM (GUATEMALA 3229). THE GAM MEMBERS
DID NOT ATTEND THE SCHEDULED MEETING. SUBSEQUENTLY
A SOURCE TOLD POLOFFS THAT THE GAM DIRECTORS HAD BEEN
AWARE OF THE APPOINTMENT, BUT COULD NOT ATTEND BECAUSE
THEY WERE BUSY WITH PREPARATION FOR THE APRIL 13
MANIFESTATION. SPECIFICALLY, THEY WERE MEETING WITH
MEMBERS OF UNION GROUPS IN ORDER TO SOLICIT SUPPORT
FOR THE DEMONSTRATION.

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