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ACTION ARA-17

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 5537

DEPARTMENT PASS DIA FOR AA-2 AND DI-5

HERMENEGILDO CUENCA DIAZ

SUBJECT: CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES DECIDES NOT TO CALL  
DEFENSE SECRETARY

1. SUMMARY: MEXICAN CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES TURNED DOWN SEPTEMBER 29 REQUEST, SPONSORED BY OPPOSITION PAN PARTY, TO CALL DEFENSE SECRETARY CUENCA DIAZ TO APPEAR BEFORE BODY. PAN MOTION MADE CLEAR THAT PARTY'S DEPUTIES INTENDED TO QUESTION CUENCA DIAZ ABOUT INTERNAL SECURITY SITUATION. PRI SPEAKER, DEPUTY CUAUHEMOC SANTA ANA, CHARGED THAT PAN TRYING TO TURN CHAMBER INTO INQUISITIONAL BODY. DURING DEBATE, PAN DEPUTY BERNARDO BATIZ VAZQUEZ QUESTIONED WHETHER OR NOT TOUTED "DEMOCRATIC OPENING," SUPPOSEDLY EPITOMIZED BY RECENT HIGHLY PUBLICIZED APPEARANCES BEFORE CHAMBER OF OTHER CABINET MEMBERS, IS REAL. QUESTION ALMOST RHETORICAL; PAN MOTION EVIDENTLY WAS NO SURPRISE TO PRI MEMBERS, AND QUICK, NEGATIVE RESPONSE PROBABLY HAD BEEN WORKED OUT IN ADVANCE AT LEAST AS ADMINISTRATION CONTINGENCY.  
END SUMMARY.

2. IN WHAT MUST HAVE BEEN ACRIMONIOUS EXCHANGE, "MAJORITY" OF CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES TURNED DOWN IN VOICE VOTE PAN-SPONSORED MOTION TO CALL DEFENSE SECRETARY CUENCA DIAZ TO APPEAR BEFORE BODY. ALL PAN DEPUTIES (20) SPONSORED MOVE. WE PRESUME THAT OVERWHELMING PRI MAJORITY (178) VOTED AGAINST.

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3. ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS, PAN MOTION, INTRODUCED BY DEPUTY HIRAM ESCUDERO, WAS BASED ON DESIRE TO "LEARN REAL DIMENSIONS OF DIVERSE MANIFESTATIONS OF PUBLIC DISQUIET EVIDENCED BY ACTS OF VIOLENCE IN SOME ENTITIES OF THE REPUBLIC..." PAN INTEREST ALSO EXTENDED TO DISCUSSION OF FEDERAL FIREARMS LAW (EMBASSY IS A-55, JAN. 28 1972), MILIARY EFFORTS IN ANTI-NARCOTICS CAMPAIGNS, AND DESIRABILITY OF AMENDING CONSCRIPTION LAW.

4. IN HIS RESPONSE, DEPUTY CUAUHEMOC SANTA ANA TERMED PAN MOVE ONE OF "BAD FAITH" OUT OF KEEPING WITH INVITATIONS EXTENDED TO OTHER CABINET MEMBERS. HE PERCEIVED INTENT TO POSE "QUESTIONS WHICH SURELY WOULD BE CHARGED WITH DECEIT AIMED AT PRESENTING TO PUBLIC A MEXICAN ARMY WITHOUT PRESTIGE AND AT SERVICE OF INTERESTS CONTRARY TO THOSE OF MEXICAN PEOPLE... WE DON'T CONFUSE DEMOCRACY WITH ANARCHY, NOR DO WE CONFUSE APPEARANCES OF CABINET MEMBERS WITH INQUISITION SOUGHT HERE BY DEPUTIES OF RIGHTIST PARTY ... THOSE WHO WISH TO FISH IN TROUBLED WATERS, AMONG THEM THOSE OF THE RIGHT WHO WOULD BENEFIT FROM ITS EXISTENCE, SPEAK OF AND SUSTAIN INSTITUTIONALIZED VIOLENCE ..."

5. IN ACID REBUTTAL, DEPUTY BERNARDO BATIZ VAZQUEZ STATED "WE THINK THAT PROBLEMS CONFRONTING GOVERNMENT AND THOSE PROBLEMS FACED BY MEXICAN ARMY ARE PROBLEMS OF ALL OF US AND THAT PEOPLE HAVE RIGHT TO BE INFORMED. WE KNOW THAT WHEN A MEXICAN SOLDIER DIES IN A GUERRERO AMBUSH, IT IS A MEXICAN WHO IS BEING SACRIFICED AND WE WANT TO HAVE ALL INFORMATION WHICH PUBLIC OPINION REQUIRES ... I WONDER ABOUT 'DEMOCRATIC OPENING' IF IT IS SIMPLY MATTER OF FORM IN WHICH ONE PART OF CONGRESS CALLS PUBLIC OFFICIALS OF ITS CHOOSING AND REFUSES POSSIBILITY THAT OTHERS COME TO ANSWER OUR QUESTIONS. IF SUCH IS CASE, WE THINK THERE IS NO SUCH OPENING, THAT THERE IS NO REAL REASON (FOR REFUSAL) BUT SIMPLY A PRETEXT TO DENY APPEARANCE OF A PUBLIC OFFICIAL..."

6. FINAL, RATHER LAME, PRI ARGUMENTS WERE THAT OTHER CABINET OFFICERS WHO HAD APPEARED BEFORE CHAMBER (FOREIGN SECRETARY RABASA, HYDRAULIC RESOURCES SECRETARY ROVIROSA WADE, FINANCE MINISTER MARGAIN, AMONG OTHERS) HAD DONE SO "BECAUSE THEY WERE DEALING WITH SUBJECTS OF EVIDENT SOCIAL INTEREST ... SUCH MOTIVATIONS DO NOT EXIST (IN CASE OF CUENCA DIAZ), NOR

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ARE THERE PREVIOUS DECISIONS WITH SOCIAL APPLICATION WHICH WOULD BE OF INTEREST TO US SINCE ALL MATERIAL IN THIS RESPECT IS CONTAINED IN REPORT WHICH HE (DEFSEC) HAS SUBMITTED TO THIS CONGRESS...."

7. COMMENT: PRI REACTION, WHILE PERHAPS PREDICTABLE GIVEN COM POLICY OF PLAYING DOWN GUERRERO INCIDENTS AND OTHER QUESTIONS DEALING WITH INTERNAL SECURITY, WAS PARTICULARLY HEAVY-HANDED. POLICY OF CABINET APPEARANCES BEFORE CONGRESS IS POINTED TO AS "NEW INNOVATION" AND A CONCRETE INDICATION OF ECHEVERRIA ADMINISTRATION'S INTEREST IN UPGRADING ROLE OF LEGISLATURE WHILE CONCOMITANTLY SERVING AS EVIDENCE OF HERALDED "DEMOCRATIC OPENING." NONETHELESS, PROVISION FOR SUCH APPEARANCES CONTAINED IN ARTICLE 93 OF CONSTITUTION SO THAT PAN SEEMS TO HAVE HAD SOUND PARLIAMENTARY GROUNDS ON WHICH TO REQUEST APPEARANCE. BY REBUFFING ATTEMPT TO HAVE CUENCA DIAZ APPEAR BEFORE INQUISITIVE AND PERHAPS SKEPTICAL OPPOSITION POLITICIANS, GOM SIDESTEPED POTENTIALLY EMBARRASSING PUBLIC AIRING OF THESE PROBLEMS. HOWEVER, THE GOM THEREBY INCURRED RISK THAT SOME MIGHT INTERPRET THE DENIAL AS AN INDICATION THAT ADMINISTRATION IS TRYING TO COVER UP SITUATION WHICH IS MORE SERIOUS THAN PUBLIC HAS BEEN LED TO BELIEVE.

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