

TELEGRAM

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FROM Amembassy TEGUCIGALPA CLASSIFICATION ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

CN: 1946

E.O. 11652X

12065: GDS 3/9/88 (NEGROPONTE, JOHN D.) OR-M

TAGS: SREF, SHUM, HO

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK'S ^{MARCH 10} ~~MEETING~~ MEETING WITH UNHCR HARTLING
USMISSION ~~USUN NEW YORK~~

ACTION: ~~USUN NEW YORK~~ IMMEDIATE

INFO: SECSTATE WASHDC
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
USMISSION GENEVA

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ TEGUCIGALPA 1946

FOR AMBASSADOR KIRKPATRICK FROM NEGROPONTE

1. ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ - ENTIRE TEXT
2. In light of your planned meeting with Paul Hartling in New York, I thought you might be interested in some summary impressions of the problems we believe UNHCR faces here.
3. First, it has been almost two years since UNHCR established their presence here in Honduras. The last significant influx of Salvadoran refugees arrived in March 1981. Original UN plan was to complete transfer of all Salvadoran refugees from border area to interior location by January/February this year. However, as of

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CLEARANCES:

Dept. of State, RPS/IPS, Margaret P. Grafeld, Dir.
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Date 6/1/98 Exemption _____

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this writing less than one-third of the Salvadoran refugee population has been moved to locations away from the border.

4. What is the problem? In addition to propaganda efforts and inspired stories by those who would wish to prevent the transfer for their own non-humanitarian reasons, there is the simple fact that UNHCR does not know what to do about refugees who decline to move ~~voluntarily~~ voluntarily. In certain areas where the ~~refugees~~ refugee transfers have already taken place the UNHCR has coped effectively by simply not providing any additional food or other assistance to the affected locality. But UNHCR feels particularly stymied in places where they have not ^{yet} ~~not~~ made any transfers and where they expect significant refugee resistance to the transfer. The problem is particularly acute in the village of La Virtud which, in addition to other considerations, has become an international symbol of the entire Salvador refugee situation. Therefore, any effort to move refugees from La Virtud against their will would likely receive considerably more publicity than any such move from another locality.

5. We have urged UNHCR to consider intensifying public relations efforts with refugees. They could for example show refugees in La Virtud video tapes of conditions

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in Mesa Grande. UNHCR could also do more to counter adverse and unjustified negative publicity about conditions at Mesa Grande. For example, it is in UNHCR interest as sponsor of the camp to correct distorted impression conveyed by Alan Riding NYT article this subject in March 4 edition. Also we have on numerous occasions reminded UNHCR that refugees do not have full rights of Honduran citizens and cannot be allowed complete discretion as to where they are settled. While obviously force should be used only as a last resort, and we doubt that even GOH would wish to contemplate such use at this stage, there are differing levels of pressure which we feel can reasonably be brought to bear on the situation.

Final
6. ~~Next~~ problem is that a minimum of seventy-five percent of UNHCR personnel time in Honduras is spent dealing with Salvador refugee situation, despite fact that last major influx was ~~roughly~~ roughly a ~~year~~ year ago. We are fearful that this focus detracts attention from the emergency situation with regard to Misquito Indians whose numbers are now approaching those of the Salvador caseload.

Embassy believes UNHCR should do more to show its interest in Misquito problem.

~~The final~~ ~~though~~ ~~we~~ ~~are~~ ~~not~~ ~~sure~~ ~~that~~ ~~any~~ ~~such~~ ~~comparable~~ ~~arrangements~~ ~~elsewhere~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~world~~ ~~UNHCR~~ ~~implementing~~ ~~agency~~ ~~relationship~~ ~~in~~ ~~Honduras~~ ~~has~~ ~~been~~

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