1. ESCAPE - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. I have not yet heard back from President Paz in regard to our conversation of December 18. I was thinking in terms of following up during the early part of next week.

3. On assumption that Paz responds favorably, what does Department envisage as next step? My suggestion would be that, if Paz is favorably disposed, I urge him to get in contact with counterparts in Salvador and Costa Rica. I would also advise him to get in touch with the Venezuelans. I recognize that this recommended course of action risks our losing some control over the process because, for example, Paz is likely to wish to raise matter
with Guatemalans and possibly even Belize as well. Counterbalancing this risk would be the possible benefit of having prompted Central Americans themselves to initiate some form of concerted regional action.

4. In short it seems to me that tactical judgment which Washington must make is whether we wish this exercise to be on a tightly controlled Washington leash or whether we wish to push the concept hard but entrust implementation and evolution of the details to the Central Americans themselves. From Tegucigalpa perspective, latter course of action would not appear unduly risky.

NEGROPONTE