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(FOLLOWING FS MATERIAL NOT FOR PUBLICATION)
NEWSWEEK ISSUE OF NOVEMBER 8 CARRIES A SIDEBAR STORY
HEADED: "OUR MAN IN TEGUCIGALPA."

JOHN NEGROPONTE, THE U.S. AMBASSADOR IN HONDURAS, DOESN'T
LOOK LIKE THE UGLY AMERICAN. AT 43, HE IS TALL AND BROADISH;
HIS MANNER IS STUDIALLY BLAND. HIS DELIBERATE, PAUSE-
FILLED CONVERSATION, SAYS ONE FREQUENT DINNER GUEST,
"PROMPTS A KEEN DESIRE FOR COFFEE." BUT ANOTHER WHO
KNOWS NEGROPONTE BETTER CALLS HIM "A Machiavelli-only
RENDER." HE IS STREET SMART. HE SPEAKS FLUENT
SPANISH, FRENCH, GREEK AND VIETNAMESE. HE READS
SHAKESPEARE. SAYS ONE HONDURAN OFFICIAL WHO HAS
FOLLOWED HIS PROGRESS, "HE MUST LOVE "JULIUS CAESAR."

NEGROPONTE'S 12-MONTH TENURE IN HONDURAS HAS BEEN A BIT
IMPERIOUS. AT THE INAUGURATION OF PRESIDENT ROBERTO
SUAZO COROVA LAST JANUARY—THE FIRST CIVILIAN PRESIDENT
IN NINE YEARS—A MESSENGER HANDED THE NEW LEADER A FOUR-PAGE
LETTER FROM THE U.S. EMBASSY DRAFTED BY THE NEW AMERICAN
AMBASSADOR, ENCOURAGING A PROMPT "REVITALIZATION" OF
THE AILING ECONOMY THE LETTER—USING THE IMPERATIVE
FORM OF SPANISH-DIRECTED THE GOVERNMENT OF HONDURAS TO
TAKE 11 SPECIFIC ACTIONS, SUCH AS REDUCING TAXES ON MINING
COMPANIES AND LIFTING SOME PRICE CONTROLS. THE GOVERNMENT
DUTIFULLY COMPLIED WITH MANY OF THE DEMANDS.
NEGROPONTE'S INFLUENCE STEADILY GREW, AND, IT APPEARS, SU
DID HIS INVOLVEMENT IN COVERT ACTION AGAINST NICARAGUA.
"I'M NOT SAYING THAT THE GUY WHO GIVES ALL THE ORDERS
HERE, EVEN FOR COVERT OPS, IS NEGROPONTE," SAYS A
WESTERN SOURCE WHO KNOWS. "BUT THAT GUY WEARS NEGROPONTE'S
SUITS AND EATS HIS BREAKFAST. DO YOU GET THE
PICTURE?"

NEGROPONTE'S ARRIVAL IN TEGUCIGALPA WAS
SOMETHING OF A SURPRISE. FEW EXPECTED AN AMBASSADOR OF QUITE
HIS CALIBER. "ANYONE WHO THINKS THAT I'M EXTREMELY
AMBITIOUS JUST DOESN'T KNOW ME VERY WELL," HE SAYS MILDLY.
BUT NO ONE HAS EVER CALLED HIM AN UNDERACHIEVER. "KNOWING
THIS ADMINISTRATION'S PREOCCUPATION WITH CENTRAL
AMERICA AND ITS WORRIES ABOUT HONDURAS IN PARTICULAR, HE
SET OUT TO MAKE A MARK IN HONDURAS THAT WOULD BE NOTICED ALL
"THE WAY TO THE TOP," SAYS A COLLEAGUE WHO HAS KNOWN HIM FOR YEARS.

CAREER: EDUCATED AT EXETER AND YALE, NEGROPONTE JOINED THE FOREIGN SERVICE AT THE AGE OF 21 AND ROSE QUICKLY. HE WAS A FAVORED POLITICAL OFFICER IN SAIGON AT THE HEIGHT OF THE WAR IN VIETNAM. HE WAS SENT AS AN EMISSARY TO THE PARIS PEACE TALKS, WHERE HE INSISTED THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS GIVING UP TOO MUCH TO THE COMMUNISTS. THE YOUNG NEGROPONTE WAS REWARDED WITH A POST AT THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL. AFTER FALLING OUT WITH HIS ONETIME MENTOR, HENRY KISSINGER, WHO WAS THEN NATIONAL-SECURITY ADVISER, NEGROPONTE WAS EXILED TO ECUADOR AS POLITICAL COUNSELOR, BUT HE BOUNCED BACK TO BECOME U.S. CONSUL GENERAL IN THESSALONIKI, GREECE.

SINCE COMING TO HONDURAS, NEGROPONTE HAS WORKED HARD TO ESTABLISH HIMSELF AS SOMETHING MORE THAN OUR MAN IN TEGUCIGALPA. FELLOW ENVOYS ARE PARTICULARLY GALLED BY HIS HABIT OF SENDING UPBRAIDING CABLES WHEN HE DISAPPROVES OF THEIR ACTIONS. HIS EFFORTS HAVE NOT BEEN AS SUCCESSFUL AS HE MIGHT HAVE HOPED: HONDURANS IN FREQUENT CONTACT WITH THE AMBASSADOR SAY HE WAS "DEEPLY DISAPPOINTED" AND "PERSONALLY HURT" THAT PRESIDENT REAGAN CHOSE TO MAKE COSTA RICA HIS ONLY STOP IN CENTRAL AMERICA DURING A PLANNED FIVE-DAY TOUR OF LATIN AMERICA AT THE BEGINNING OF DECEMBER. THE AMBASSADOR MAY BE IN FOR MORE DISAPPOINTMENT. "HIS OBSESSION TO GET TO THE TOP FAST WILL BE THE VERY THING THAT BRINGS HIM CRASHING DOWN," CONCLUDES A FOREIGN DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUE IN HONDURAS. "THE QUESTION IS WHETHER HE MIGHT NOT BRING A POLICY AND THE FRAGILE GOVERNMENT OF HONDURAS DOWN WITH HIM."

(END TEXT)

(END FS MATERIAL NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

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