1. ENTIRE TEXT

2. EVENING DECEMBER 20 PAPAL NUNCIO CALLED ON AMBASSADOR TO STATE THAT HIS CHARGE IN MANAGUA HAD INFORMED HIM THAT BISHOP SALVADOR SCHLAEFER OF BLUEFIELDS HAD BEEN CAPTURED EARLIER IN THE DAY AT FRANCIA SIRTE ON ATLANTIC COAST OF NICARAGUA. ANOTHER AMERICAN PRIEST AND TWO NICARAGUAN DEACONS WERE ALSO ALLEGEDLY CAPTURED. ACCORDING TO NUNCIO, THERE WAS CONFRONTATION BETWEEN ANTI-SANDINISTAS AND GOVERNMENT FORCES DURING WHICH CLERICS WERE CAPTURED BY REBELS AND TAKEN TOWARDS HONDURAN BORDER. NUNCIO SAID THAT FIRST OF ALL HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT SCHLAEFER'S WELFARE. NEXT, HE FEARED THAT SANDINISTAS MIGHT USE INCIDENT TO DISTRACT ATTENTION FROM THEIR OWN MISTREATMENT OF THE CHURCH.

3. AMBASSADOR ASKED NUNCIO IF HE WAS CERTAIN THAT THIS STORY WERE TRUE AND NOT SOME TYPE OF SANDINISTA PROVOCATION. FOR EXAMPLE, COULD IT BE THAT SANDINISTAS HAD IN SOME WAY HARMED SCHLAEFER AND WERE NOW SEEKING TO LAY BLAME ON SOMEONE ELSE? NUNCIO SAID HE WAS INCLINED TO BELIEVE NICARAGUAN GOVERNMENT STORY WHICH HAD BEEN "CONFIRMED" BY FSLN. NUNCIO ASKED THAT EMBASSY LOOK INTO MATTER ESPECIALLY IF IT WERE TRUE THAT SCHLAEFER HAD BEEN TAKEN TO HONDURAS. AMBASSADOR RESPONDED THAT WE WOULD INQUIRE INTO SITUATION AND ALSO SUGGESTED THAT PAPAL CHARGE PURSUE MATTER WITH OUR EMBASSY IN MANAGUA.

4. COMMENT: AS OF THIS WRITING EMBASSY HAS NO EPT NO INDEPENDENT CONFIRMATION OF SCHLAEFER'S CAPTURE OR OF ALLEGATION THAT HE HAS BEEN TAKEN TO HONDURAS. WE WILL HAVE TO WAIT FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS.

5. MEANWHILE, WE WOULD OFFER COMMENT THAT FROM THIS DISTANT VANTAGE POINT WE CAN SEE NO EPT NO OBVIOUS ADVANTAGE TO ANTI-SANDINISTAS IN HARMING OR CAPTURING A PROMINENT MEMBER OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH; NOR WOULD THERE BE ANY OBVIOUS BENEFIT IN TAKING CAPTIVES TO HONDURAS. CONVERSELY, ONE COULD SPECULATE THAT POTENTIAL BENEFIT TO SANDINISTAS OF FABRICATING SUCH AN INCIDENT COULD BE SUBSTANTIAL. NEGROPONTE ET #3924