DECAPTIONED

E.O. 12356: DECLASSIFIED

TAGS: PREL, I/4

SUBJECT: CONTADORA DEVELOPMENTS

1. **ENTIRE TEXT**

2. SUMMARY: CONTADORA PROCESS APPEARS TO BE HEADED IN DIRECTION IT WAS FORECASTING FOR SOME TIME. WE ARE SEEING END-STAGES. WE BELIEVE GREATER PUBLIC AWARENESS OF INADEQUACIES OF NICARAGUAN POSITION IS NECESSARY. ALSO, SUGGEST STRONGER EFFORT BE PUT BEHIND HONDURAN IDEA OF WORKING GROUPS AS NEXT LOGICAL STEP. FINALLY, RECOMMEND UNG PLAY MORE ACTIVE PUBLIC ROLE IN SUPPORT OF CORE FOUR IN LIGHT OF LATTER'S WEAKNESS AND FACT THAT CONTADORA ARE Ganging UP ON THEM. END SUMMARY.

3. STEVEN KING'S DECEMBER FIFTEEN NEW YORK TIMES PIECE, ENTITLED "HONDURAS SAID TO SNAG LATIN PEACE BID," BRINGS US TO WHERE WE HAVE SAID CONTADORA PROCESS WAS LEADING FOR SOME TIME. IN SHORT, OUR CONCERN HAS BEEN THAT CONTADORA GROUP WOULD BE DOMINATED BY MEXICO THINKING AND THAT THROUGH SERIES OF MANEUVERS AND TACTICS CONTADORA WOULD PRESS CORE FOUR TO ACCEPT NICARAGUAN STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH AND FAILING THAT WOULD ASK TO PAINT HONDURAS, AND IF IMPLICATION USES AS OBSTACLE TO PEACE IN REGION OTHER THAN NICARAGUA. THIS TACTIC IS NOW OBVIOUSLY BEING USED TO IMPROVE SOME FRUIT AS EVIDENCED BY KING ARTICLE AND REACTION OF SOME OF OUR RECENT CONGRESSIONAL VISITORS.

4. A NUMBER OF STEPS MAY BE CALLED FOR AT THIS JUNCTURE. FIRST OF ALL, IT IS NOT CLEAR TO JS THAT WE HAVE SUFFICIENTLY EXPLAINED PUBLICLY THE COMPLEXITIES OF REACHING A COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL AGREEMENT OR THE IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE VERIFICATION AND "IMUL-TANEOUS IMPACT.

5. NOW HAVE WE DETAINED THE IN-ADHESIONS OF THE FOUR NICARAGUAN PEACE TREATIES WHICH, AFTER ALL, MUST BE TAKEN AS THEIR LAST OFFICIAL POSITION. (SEE TEGUCIGALPA 12343 FOR EMBASSY ANALYSIS OF THE INADEQUACIES OF NICARAGUA'S DRAFT TREATIES.) (SLIGHTLY SANITIZED VERSION MIGHT BE SUITABLE FOR PUBLIC EXPOSITION.) INSTEAD, WE HAVE ALLOWED IMPRESSION TO DEVELOP THAT "VARIOUS VACUUM SANDISTAS..."
EMANATIONS SUBSEQUENT TO THE FAILING OF THOSE DRAFTS REPRESENT SOME CONCEPTIVE NEW DEVELOPMENT IN NICARAGUA’S POSITION. A JOURNAL STORY MENTIONED ABOVE AND SMALL LOCAL PRESS ITEM APPEARING IN DECEMBER SIXTEEN LA PRENSA TO EFFECT THAT CONTADORA GROUP HAS NOW GIVEN US AN ULTIMATUM TO GET SERIOUS ABOUT CONTADORA WOULD APPEAR TO SUGGEST THAT THE TIME HAS COME FOR US TO BE MORE EXPLICIT AND DETAILED IN THE PUBLIC ELABORATION OF OUR POSITION. WE CAN NO LONGER ADEQUATELY EXPRESS OUR POSITION BY HIDING BEHIND THE CONTADORA SHIELD.

5. ANOTHER SUGGESTION IS THAT WE GIVE THOUGHT AS TO HOW TO HELP CORE FOUR MAKE HONDURAN IDEA OF GROUPS A REALITY. IF NICARAGUA AND CONTADORA GROUP ARE REALLY INTERESTED IN MORE DETAILED NEGOTIATIONS WHICH GO TO THE BOTTOM OF THE REGION’S PROBLEMS, WHAT BETTER WAY THAN TO FORM, SAY, FOUR WORKING GROUPS — ONE POLITICAL, ONE MILITARY, ONE ECONOMIC AND ONE FOR VERIFICATION?

6. IN THE LAST ANALYSIS, THE ROOT OF OUR PROBLEM WITH CONTADORA REMAINS THE FACT THAT THE CONTADORA COUNTRIES ARE NOT RPT NOT HONEST BROKERS. THEY HAVE TAKEN SIDES. THIS STATEMENT MAY BE TRUE IN DIFFERING DEGREES FOR DIFFERENT CONTADORA COUNTRIES, BUT THE Plain truth of the matter is that Mexico has been permitted to drive the process, while simultaneously playing the role of private advisor to the Nicaraguan government. The core four, especially Honduras, have always pinned their hopes on Venezuela’s serving as a counterweight to Mexico complemented by the USG’s supporting core four unity behind the scenes. Things do not seem to be working out that way.

7. WE BELIEVE THE DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN TOO RELUCTANT TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE PUBLICLY. AS WE HAVE REPEATEDLY NOTED, THE UNITED STATES’ SUPPORT OF THE CONTADORA PROCESS IS TOO OFTEN INTERPRETED AS SUPPORT FOR THE POSITIONS ESPoused BY THE CONTADORA NATIONS. WE AND
OUR FRIENDS ARE IN A NEGOTIATION WITH A MARXIST GOVERNMENT, NOT WITH THE CONTADORA MOVEMENT. IN OTHER NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE COMMUNISTS, THE CONGRESS AND AMERICAN PEOPLE HAVE SUGGESTED THAT AGREEMENTS CANNOT BE BASED ON MUTUAL TRUST BUT MUST BE DETAILED, VERIFIABLE AND ENFORCEABLE. THE PUBLIC IS SIMPLY NOT THINKING ABOUT CONTADORA IN THESE TERMS. WE FEAR THAT IF THE PRESENT TRENDS CONTINUE UNCHECKED THAT THE HONDURANS WILL EITHER FIND THEMSELVES ACCEPTING AN UNWISE AGREEMENT OR THE NICARAGUAANS WILL SUCCOUR IN BLAMING THE BLAME FOR A FAILED CONTADORA AT HONDURAS' FEET. LATTER OUTCOME COULD ADVERSELY AFFECT SUPPORT FOR ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS, ESPECIALLY IN ABSENCE OF A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE REGIONAL POLITICAL SOLUTION.

B. AT ISSUE HERE IS THE QUESTION OF "WHO IS THE REAL OBSTACLE TO PEACE?" WE CAN THINK OF NO BETTER TACTIC BY THE COMMUNISTS IN 1994 THAN TO TRY AND PORTRAY THE USG AND ITS FRIENDS AS THE REAL OBSTACLE TO PEACE, BE IT IN CENTRAL AMERICA OR ELSEWHERE. IN ORDER TO AVOID BEING PAINTED INTO THIS CORNER, WE CANNOT ENTRUST THE DEFENSE OF OUR POSITION TO OTHER COUNTRIES. NEGRONI