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ACTION NODS-00

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DECAPTION

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 RELEASE DECLASSIFY
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Date: 4/22/98

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FOIA Exemptions _____ () CLASSIFY as () S or () C Sec.
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E. O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PREL, MARR, HO
SUBJECT: SECURITY ASSURANCES TO HONDURAS

1. ~~SECRET~~ - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. THIS IS AN ACTION MESSAGE.

3. SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR WAS SUMMONED TO HONDURAN NSC MEETING MAY 15 TO DISCUSS SECURITY ASSURANCES. GOH ACCEPTS OUR LANGUAGE BUT PRESIDENT, FOREIGN MINISTER AND CHIEF OF ARMED FORCES ARE ADAMANT THAT THEY BE SIGNED BY PRESIDENT'S SUAZO AND REAGAN AT THEIR MAY 21 MEETING. GOH ARGUMENT RESTS ON THE FACT THAT THEY DROPPED THEIR INSISTENCE ON A SEPARATE BILATERAL SECURITY PACT AND THEREFORE BELIEVE A SIGNED COMMUNIQUE IS NEEDED TO MEET MINIMUM EXPECTATIONS OF HONDURAN PUBLIC OPINION. AMBASSADOR AFTER REVIEWING OUR ARGUMENTS AGAINST THIS PROPOSAL, PROMISED TO TRANSIT THIS RENEWED GOH REQUEST TO WASHINGTON FOR REPLY. NEED WASHINGTON'S RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT SUAZO'S REQUEST. END SUMMARY.

4. I WAS SUMMONED TO A HONDURAN NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING MORNING MAY 15 TO DISCUSS THE ISSUE

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OF SECURITY ASSURANCES. PRESIDENT SUAZO WAS PRESIDING AND HIS TOP CIVILIAN AND MILITARY ADVISORS WERE IN ATTENDANCE. THEY HAD OBVIOUSLY BEEN MEETING FOR SOME TIME. PAZ BARNICA SPOKE FIRST. HE EXPLAINED THAT GOH FORMED LANGUAGE OF OUR SECURITY ASSURANCES TO BE SATISFACTORY BUT THAT GOH WAS DISTURBED BY DAS MCNAMARA'S EXPLANATIONS DAY BEFORE TO EFFECT THAT A SIGNED DOCUMENT WOULD NOT RPT NOT BE POSSIBLE. PAZ SAID GOH HAD DROPPED ITS EARLIER INSISTANCE ON A SIGNED BILATERAL SECURITY PACT BECAUSE THEY UNDERSTOOD THE PROBLEMS IT GAVE US, BUT IN ITS STEAD THEY HAD EXPECTED WHATEVER ASSURANCES WE MIGHT BE PREPARED TO GIVE TO BE IN THE FORM OF A SIGNED JOINT COMMUNIQUE ("DECLARACION CONJUNTA"). PAZ THEREFORE ASKED THAT I CONVEY TO WASHINGTON ONCE AGAIN STRONG GOH DESIRE THAT ASSURANCES BE JOINTLY SIGNED.

5. AT MY SUGGESTION, ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF STAFF, COLONEL GONZALEZ THEN REVIEWED THE POINTS MADE BY DAS MCNAMARA AT THE MAY 14 MEETING ON THIS SUBJECT AND I TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO REPEAT THAT SIGNING THESE ASSURANCES SEEMED TO GIVE WASHINGTON A SERIOUS PROBLEM.

6. PRESIDENT SUAZO THEN INTERJECTED THAT GOH INSISTENCE IS NOT BASED ON LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN THE USG'S WORD OR IN THE VALIDITY OF THESE ASSURANCES. ON THE OTHER HAND BOTH GOH AND THE HONDURAN PEOPLE WOULD HAVE GREAT DIFFICULTY IN UNDERSTANDING WHY THESE ASSURANCES WERE BEING ENSHRINED IN "JUST ANOTHER PRESS COMMUNIQUE". HE FELT THIS COULD CAUSE A NEGATIVE REACTION IN HONDURAS. SUAZO ASKED THEREFORE THAT, ON HIS OWN BEHALF AND BEHALF OF ENTIRE NSC, USG RECONSIDER ITS POSITION ON THIS ISSUE. I PROMISED TO TRANSMIT GOH REQUEST ASAP.

7. COMMENT: IT APPEARS TO US THAT THE CRUCIAL POINT

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WHICH SUAZO IS STICKING ON IS HIS NEED TO HAVE A SIGNED
PIECE OF PAPER WHICH HE CAN CLAIM IS THE "COMMITMENT"
WHICH THE U.S. IS MAKING TO ASSIST HONDURAS IN CASE
OF AN AGGRESSIVE ATTACK. THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO SOLVE
THIS CURRENT IMPASSE, IF WASHINGTON IS WILLING TO GIVE
GROUND ON THE POINT OF "SIGNING". THE FIRST IS TO
ACQUIESCE IN THE SUAZO REQUEST SINCE HE FEELS STRONGLY
THAT HE NEEDS SUCH A SIGNED ASSURANCE FOR DOMESTIC
POLITICAL PURPOSES. THE OTHER OPTION IS TO GO AHEAD
WITH THE JOINT STATEMENT AS CURRENTLY DRAFTED AND PRO-
MISE THE HONDURANS A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT WHICH
WOULD BE SENT IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE VISIT AND WHICH
WOULD REPEAT THE ESSENTIAL POINTS OF THE SECURITY
ASSURANCES. THIS WOULD ENABLE US TO KEEP THE JOINT
STATEMENT AS LOW-KEY AS POSSIBLE AND SHOULD INDUCE THE
HONDURANS TO COOPERATE IN ANY REMARKS TO THE PRESS
DURING THE VISIT. SEVERAL DAYS THEREAFTER, BUT WELL
OUT OF WASHINGTON, THEY WOULD HAVE SIGNED CONFIRMATION.
SINCE THE LETTER WOULD CONTAIN NOTHING NOT ALREADY IN
THE STATEMENT, THERE SHOULD BE NO DIFFICULTY IN SENDING
SUCH A LETTER. I WOULD APPRECIATE WASHINGTON'S
RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT SUAZO'S REQUEST SOONEST.
NEGROPONTE



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