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TO RUEHC / SECSTATE WASHDC 9006
INFO RUESMG / AMEMBASSY MANAGUA 6295
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DECAPTION

~~SECRET~~ SECTION 01 OF 02 TEGUCIGALPA 01684

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (CORRECTS ACTION ADDEE)

DECAPTIONED

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: HO, NU, XK

SUBJECT: HONDURAN MILITARY VIEWS ON THE ANTI-SANDINISTAS

1. ~~SECRET~~ - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: GOH MILITARY BELIEVE PRESENT LEVELS OF ANTI-SANDINISTA ACTIVITY ARE INSUFFICIENT TO AFFECT BEHAVIOR OF SANDINISTA REGIME. THEY BELIEVE AID NEEDS TO BE STEPPED UP SO THAT "DECISIVE" OUTCOME CAN OCCUR WITHIN 18 MONTHS-- 2 YEARS. CONVERSELY, IF CONGRESS EXPLICITLY DENIES ANTI-SANDINISTAS FUDING AFTER FEBRUARY 28, THEN CONTINUED GOH COOPERATION WITH FDN IS VERY MUCH IN DOUBT. MEANWHILE, GOH COOPERATES WITH FDN GRUDGINGLY WHILE INSISTING ON MINIMUM POSSIBLE PROFILE. END SUMMARY.

3. AFTER THE JANUARY 31 DINNER AT MY RESIDENCE IN HONOR OF DAS MCNAMARA, A REDUCED GROUP OF HONDURAN MILITARY OFFICERS AND A HANDFUL OF KEY EMBASSY OFFICERS, PLUS MCNAMARA, REPAIRED TO THE LIBRARY TO DISCUSS THE STATUS OF ANTI-SANDINISTA EFFORTS INSIDE NICARAGUA. THE HONDURAN MILITARY GROUP CONSISTED OF ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF STAFF AND GONZALEZ, AIR FORCE COMMANDER ZEPEDA, ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF SANCHEZ AND FIRST BATTALION COMMANDER RIERA. RIERA AND GONZALEZ DID MOST OF THE TALKING.

4. IN THE ENSUING CONVERSATION, THE FOLLOWING KEY POINTS EMERGED. FIRST, THE GOH BELIEVES THE ANTI-SANDINISTAS ARE IN A RACE AGAINST TIME, BOTH BECAUSE OF THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE SANDINISTA REGIME AND THE UNITED STATES POLITICAL PROCESS. BOTH RIERA AND GONZALEZ WERE VERY VOCAL IN THEIR VIEW THAT A TIME LIMIT BE SET BY WHICH FDN MUST ACHIEVE DECISIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS. RIERA MENTIONED THE FIGURE EIGHTEEN MONTHS TO TWO YEARS AS AN ILLUSTRATIVE TIME FRAME. BOTH HE AND GONZALEZ SAID THAT, IN ANY EVENT, THEY FELT DECISIVE RESULTS NEED BE ACHIEVED BEFORE OUR NEXT CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS.

5. SECOND, HONDURANS BELIEVED FDN NEEDS INCREASED MATERIAL SUPPORT IN ORDER TO BE EFFECTIVE. AND, AS A RELATED MATTER, THEY NEED A MORE SYSTEMATIC APPROACH

4/27/85
MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
SUBJECT: HONDURAN MILITARY VIEWS ON THE ANTI-SANDINISTAS
IN BRIEF

FOIA Exemptions
PA Exemptions
CLASSIFIED as (S) or (C) Sec.
DOWNGRADE IS TO (S) or (C)

~~SECRET~~ UNCLASSIFIED

BASED ON WELL PLANNED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES. TO THIS END, AND WITHIN A FRAMEWORK OF INCREASED EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE, HONDURAS HAD BEEN WILLING TO PLACE THEIR OWN OFFICERS IN A DIRECT SUPPORTING ROLE TO FDN. (COMMENT: ENTHUSIASM FOR THIS "COMBINED COMMAND" CONCEPT APPEARS TO HAVE WANED OF LATE.)

6. IMPLICIT IN FOREGOING EXPOSITION WAS NOTION THAT GOH WAS PREPARED TO GIVE FDN SOME, BUT NOT UNLIMITED, TIME TO ACHIEVE ITS PURPOSES. AND THERE WAS NO SUGGESTION THAT DENIAL OF SANCTUARY TO FDN WAS IMMINENT. NONETHELESS, ALL OF THE GOH MILITARY PARTICIPANTS VOICED PREOCCUPATION OVER WHAT TO DO IF TWELVE TO SIXTEEN THOUSAND FDN COMBATANTS (PLUS FAMILIES) DECIDE TO SEEK PERMANENT REFUGE ON HONDURAN SOIL. AND IT WAS CLEAR FROM THEIR COMMENTS THEY DID NOT BELIEVE FDN ACHIEVEMENTS INSIDE NICARAGUA THUS FAR HAD HAD ANY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON BEHAVIOR OF SANDINISTAS OR LATTER'S ABILITY TO GOVERN THE COUNTRY. SO, WHILE GOH WAS PREPARED TO GIVE THE FDN SOME MORE TIME, IT WAS EQUALLY CLEAR THAT, IF PRESENT LEVELS OF EFFORT AND SUCCESS WERE NOT IMPROVED, GOH AT SOME NOT TOO DISTANT POINT WOULD RECONSIDER ITS ENTIRE APPROACH.

7. COMMENT: NONE OF THE FOREGOING IS ESPECIALLY NEW. IT WAS, HOWEVER, NOTEWORTHY THAT ISSUE OF "IRREGULAR FORCES" WAS ONE THAT GOH WANTED ON THE AGENDA FOR DAS MCNAMARA'S VISIT. AGENDA ITEM WAS FINESSED BY DISCUSSING ISSUE IN THIS INFORMAL AFTER-DINNER SETTING. I WAS ALSO STRUCK BY APPARENT LEAD OF COLONEL RIERA IN THESE DISCUSSIONS. AS A DYNAMIC MEMBER OF THE WIDELY TOUTED "FIFTH PROMOTION," RIERA IS WITHOUT DOUBT AN ASCENDANT MEMBER OF THE HONDURAN ARMED FORCES AND, IN MY JUDGEMENT, A POTENTIAL ARMED FORCES COMMANDER AFTER LOPEZ STEPS DOWN IN JANUARY 1987. DESPITE BEING IN THE PRESENCE OF THOSE SUPERIOR TO HIM IN THE FORMAL MILITARY HIERARCHY, RIERA SPOKE ALMOST AS IF HE HAD A PERSONAL VETO OVER THE MATTERS UNDER DISCUSSION.

8. ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE MATTER, I WOULD JUDGE THAT THE HONDURANS ARE IN A REAL DILEMMA AS TO WHAT TO DO ABOUT THE "CONTRAS." AS COLONEL GONZALEZ PUT IT SO FREQUENTLY DURING THE HIGH LEVEL GOH COMMISSION VISIT TO WASHINGTON IN LATE NOVEMBER, THE GOH "STRONGLY SYMPATHIZES" WITH FDN; BUT THE ABSENCE OF QUICK AND

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DECISIVE RESULTS BRINGS WITH IT DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL COSTS FOR HONDURAS. THEY ARE BOTHERED AS MUCH AS ANYTHING ELSE BY THE CONSISTENTLY ADVERSE PUBLICITY THE ISSUE BRINGS THEM AND THIS FEELING WILL ONLY BE EXACERBATED IF THE USG ABANDONS OFFICIAL FUNDING ONCE AND FOR ALL SOMETIME THIS SPRING. IT IS THE NEGATIVE PUBLICITY, THE POTENTIAL LOSS OF THE USG FIG LEAF AND THE ONUS OF BEING THE REGIONAL POINT-MAN IN A CONFRONTATION WITH NICARAGUA THAT CAUSES GOH TO SEEK TO LOWER FDN PROFILE IN EVERY POSSIBLE WAY. MINIMUM ESSENTIAL GOH COOPERATION TO KEEP THE FDN A VIABLE FORCE CONTINUES BUT IT IS VERY GRUDGING INDEED.

9. AND YET THE LEAP FROM GRUDGING, LOW-PROFILE COOPERATION TO A PROHIBITION OF FDN ACTIVITY ON HONDURAN SOIL IN ANY FORM WOULD BE A SUBSTANTIAL ONE. IT WOULD BE THE ONE STEP MOST LIKELY TO TRIGGER THE SCENARIO THE HONDURANS CLAIM THAT THEY MOST DREAD, E.G. A DEFEATED FDN HORDE RELOCATED ALMOST ENTIRELY TO HONDURAN SOIL. AND, WHILE SUCH AN EVENTUALITY COULD MOMENTARILY EASE TENSIONS WITH SANDINISTAS, IT WOULD LIKELY USHER IN A NEW AND ULTIMATELY MORE DIFFICULT SET OF RELATIONS WITH A CONSOLIDATED SANDINISTA REGIME.

10. DIVIDED AND CONFUSED AS THEY ARE, GOH ATTITUDES CAN BE DECISIVELY SHAPED BY OUR OWN ACTIONS. CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL OF ANTI-SANDINISTA FUNDING SOMETIME AFTER THE FEBRUARY 28 TRIGGER DATE WOULD MOST LIKELY ASSURE CONTINUED GOH COOPERATION WITH THE FDN, PERHAPS EVEN ON AN INCREASED SCALE. CONVERSELY, A DEFINITIVE DEFEAT IN OUR CONGRESS ON THIS ISSUE COULD WELL BRING THE END OF CONTINUED GOH COOPERATION WITH OR EVEN TOLERATION OF ARMED ANTI-SANDINISTA ELEMENTS IN ANY FORM. NEGROPOM

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