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| FROM | Amembassy TEGUCIGALPA | CLASSIFICATION | SECRET |
| E.O. 11652X | 12065: GDS 2/19/88 (NEGROPONTE, John D.) | OR-M | CN: 1358 |
| TAGS: | MASS, MARR, HO | | |
| SUBJECT: | MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO HONDURAS | | |
| ACTION: | SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY | | |
| INFO: | AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR PRIORITY USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PA PRIORITY USDOD WASHDC PRIORITY JCS WASHDC PRIORITY | | |
| | SECRET TEGUCIGALPA 1358 | | |
| REF: | TEGUCIGALPA 403, 18 JAN 2124Z | | |
| | 1. SECRET ENTIRE TEXT . | | |
| | 2. During course of February 17 meeting with Ambassador, Honduran CINC Colonel Gustavo Alvarez discussed, among other matters, his perception Honduran defense needs. Alvarez remarks were very much along lines of Embassy assessment contained reftel. Highlights Alvarez' remarks follow. | | |
| | 3. Alvarez believes WHEN his country has one and at most two years to prepare for various contingencies looming on the horizon. Business as usual approach to Honduran defense needs just won't do. | | |

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| DRAFTED BY: AMB:JDNegroponte:kjl | DRAFTING DATE 2-19-82 | TEL. EXT. 211 | CONTENTS AND CLASSIFICATION APPROVED BY: AMB:JDNegroponte |
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CLEARANCES:

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Dept. of State, RPS/IPS, Margaret P. Grafeld, Dir.
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Date 12/1/98 Exemption _____

OPTIONAL FORM 153
(Formerly FS -413)
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Dept. of State

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4. Highest priority for Alvarez is upgrading quality of Honduran Air Force with F-5E's or F-4's. He suggested possibility of arrangement whereby Honduras would give El Salvador its Super Mysteres and USG would give Honduras F-5E's or F-4's in exchange. This would conform to qualifications and capabilities of pilots in respective air forces. Alvarez became highly irritated when Ambassador asked how GOH would propose to pay for obvious difference in cost of this transaction. He commented that if our objective in Central America was to promote arms sales instead of really coping with situation, then we would certainly lose here. Honduras cannot afford new aircraft; but it needs them as best possible dissuasive measure vis-a-vis Nicaragua.

5. Other major priority, Alvarez said, was well known need for effective command and control system, including improved communications, etcetera.

6. Turning to other military needs, Alvarez says GOH wishes to buy six Canadian "Buffalo" aircraft manufactured by Havilland as part of urgent effort to increase troop mobility and access to remote areas (e.g. most of Honduras). C-123's won't do the trick because of their age, maintenance problems. Alvarez asked if Honduras paid seven-million down-payment on aircraft, could the

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USG find a way of financing the balance even though they were of Canadian manufacture?

7. Alvarez said he also wished to increase the number of officers in the army on a crash basis. He is thinking of forging one hundred new officers from the ranks of top-flight non-commissioned men. He wondered if we couldn't set up a OCS-type school at Fort Gulick in Panama ~~XXXXXX~~ and help train fifty Hondurans this year and fifty next year.

8. On another matter, Alvarez said he had been to San Salvador the day before and talked to Garcia, Gutierrez, etcetera. He offered increased collaboration on the part of Honduran armed forces including blocking operations. He claims that his offer received less enthusiastic response than he had expected.

9. COMMENT: Alvarez is tackling his new job with his customary drive and justifiable sense of urgency.

Honduras is simply not rpt not prepared for even a modest contingency with Nicaragua. Mosquitia region is virtually ~~virtually~~/undefended and communications are appalling.

For a mountainous country with inadequate road network, ~~XXXXX~~ troop transport capability is sorely lacking.

Most important, prospect of MIG-21 arrivals in Nicaragua threatens to neutralize Honduras' only real strategic deterrent, i.e., its air superiority.

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10. Embassy believes that if steps are not taken to deal with these Honduran defense deficiencies in the time-frame outlined by Alvarez, accommodationist pressures could develop within Honduran armed forces affecting not only various cooperative programs but eventually leading to some sort of Finlandization of Honduras. Another factor to bear in mind is that, though he is now ~~XXXX~~ firmly in the saddle, Alvarez will be judged by his peers in part at least by his success in obtaining our help in modernizing armed forces. Finally, widespread feeling exists in Honduran military, warranted or not, that increased help is due in recognition of constructive role in returning country to civilian rule.

11. Embassy believes foregoing considerations should be taken into account in planning whatever Section 506 action may be contemplated for Honduras; and in consideration of FY-83 FMS figures. Also, we note from various communications, informal and otherwise, that some early decision is due on Section 506 but we as yet have no specifics. Needless to say, more definitive word on what exactly is contemplated would be most welcome. From our perspective, the sooner it comes in Alvarez' tenure the better. As for FY-83 FMS, we believe repetition of current FY-82 ~~XX~~ figure of 10.6 million would be completely inadequate for genuine GOH defense needs.

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12. Finally, Embassy would welcome any initial Washington ~~XXXXXXXX~~ comments and/or guidance on possibility of assisting GOH in financing "Buffalo" purchase as requested by Alvarez and on prospects for helping Honduras graduate to next generation of fighter aircraft.


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