

TRP
VZCZCTEI *
RE RUEHC RUEBGC RUEHCV RUEBGT RUEEME RUEBMC
RUEHZP RUEHSJ RUEHSN RUEOCHA RUEHDT
DE RUEHTG #6735/01 173 **
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
R 282045Z JUN 33
FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
TO RUEHC / SECSTATE WASHDC 5434
INFO RUEBGC / AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 1791
RUEHCV / AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1383
RUEHGT / AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA 0788
RUEHME / AMEMBASSY MEXICO 1586
RUEBMC / AMEMBASSY MANAGUA 5103
RUEHZP / AMEMBASSY PANAMA 7911
RUEHSJ / AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE 8458
RUEHSN / AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR 9509
RUEOCHA / USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PN
RUEHDT / USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1230
BT

CLASS: SECRET
CHRG: PROG 6/27/33
APPRV: AMB:JDNEGROPONT
CLEAR: NONE
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MILGP DAO

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SECTION 01 OF * [REDACTED]

E.O. 12356: OADR
TAGS: PREL, PINS, PROP, XI, HO, NU, OAS, UNSC
SUBJECT: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HONDURAS/NICARAGUA BORDER
INCIDENTS AND CONTADORA PEACE PROCESS

1. [REDACTED] ENTIRE TEXT
2. AS THIS EMBASSY HAS REPORTED A NUMBER OF TIMES IN THE PAST, THERE APPEARS TO BE A DIRECT CORRELATION BETWEEN NICARAGUAN-INSPIRED INCIDENTS ON THE HONDURAN BORDER AND EFFORTS BY NICARAGUA AND OTHERS TO REINFORCE THEIR "BILATERAL THESIS" ABOUT TENSIONS IN CENTRAL AMERICA. THAT THESIS HOLDS THAT THE PRINCIPAL CAUSE OF TENSION IN THE REGION IS THE ABSENCE OF AN INTERNATIONALLY MONITORED BORDER BETWEEN HONDURAS AND NICARAGUA. THAT SAME THESIS TREATS OTHER IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF THE SITUATION SUCH AS THE INSURGENCY IN EL SALVADOR, THE PRESENCE OF FOREIGN MILITARY ADVISORS IN EACH OF THE CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES, AND THE DISPROPORTIONATE ARMS BUILD-UP IN NICARAGUA AS ISSUES OF SECOND PRIORITY THAT CAN BE DEALT WITH SEQUENTIALLY AFTER HONDURAS/NICARAGUA BORDER IS RESOLVED OR, DEPENDING ON WHO YOU TALK TO, NOT DEALT WITH AT ALL. CLEARLY, IT SUITS THE PROPONENTS OF THE BILATERAL THESIS TO PUBLICLY USE AND INFLATE THE IMPORTANCE OF INDIVIDUAL BORDER INCIDENTS TO ILLUSTRATE THE RISK OF WAR BETWEEN HONDURAS AND NICARAGUA AND THEREBY ACCENTUATE THE URGENCY OF THEIR BILATERAL APPROACH.
3. IN THE FOREGOING CONNECTION WE ARE STRUCK BY THE CONVERGENCE OF THREE DISTINCT SETS OF EVENTS. FIRST IS KILLING OF TWO UNITED STATES CITIZEN JOURNALISTS ON THE HONDURAS/NICARAGUA BORDER ON JUNE TWENTY-FIRST. THE SECOND IS THE MEXICAN/COLOMBIAN PROPOSAL FOR A POSSIBLE UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING FORCE FOR CENTRAL AMERICA, REPORTEDLY MADE TO UNSYG BY MEXICAN AND COLOMBIAN FOREIGN MINISTERS ON THE SAME DATE. AND THIRD IS THE FACT THAT BOTH THESE EVENTS TOOK PLACE DURING THE ONGOING CONTADORA WORKING GROUP MEETINGS IN PANAMA. BY PUTTING FORWARD THE

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Dept. of State, RPS/IPS, Margaret P. Grafeld, Dir.
(V) Release () Excise () Deny () Declassify
Date 6/2/98 Exemption _____

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CART OF A PEACEKEEPING FORCE BEFORE THE HORSE OF A COMPRE-
HENSIVE REGIONAL PEACE SETTLEMENT, WE CAN ONLY CONCLUDE
THAT OUR MEXICAN AND COLOMBIAN FRIENDS ARE DRIVING AT A
HONDURAS/NICARAGUA BORDER FORCE IN THE FIRST INSTANCE.
AND WE THINK IT IS REASONABLE TO EXPECT THAT EVERY
INCIDENT ALONG THE HONDURAS/NICARAGUA BORDER, DELIBERATE
OR ACCIDENTAL, BIG OR SMALL, WILL BE USED IN SUPPORT OF
THIS APPROACH.

4. FACED WITH THIS KIND OF CLEVER, BUT RATHER TRANSPARENT
ORCHESTRATION, IT SEEMS TO US THAT PUBLIC FOCUS ON THE
TOTALITY OF CAUSES OF REGIONAL TENSION AND BEHIND-THE-
SCENES ASSISTANCE TO THE FOUR FRIENDLY CENTRAL AMERICAN
COUNTRIES IN MAINTAINING A COMMON FRONT ARE OF PARAMOUNT
IMPORTANCE. IN THIS CONNECTION, WE MUST SEEK TO KEEP
PUBLIC ATTENTION ON NICARAGUAN ARMS BUILD-UP, GROWING
CUBAN INVOLVEMENT THERE, AND THE CENTRAL ROLE CUBA HAS
PLAYED IN UNIFYING AND TRAINING LOCAL COMMUNIST PARTIES.
ALSO WE MUST CONSTANTLY DISABUSE PEOPLE OF NOTION THAT WE
STAND ABOVE CENTRAL AMERICAN SITUATION AS IMPARTIAL
MEDIATORS BETWEEN EITHER GOES AND FDR/FMLN AND/OR CENTRAL
AMERICA FOUR AND CONTADORA GROUP. IN OUR VIEW OUR INTER-
LOCUTORS SHOULD HAVE NO DOUBT THAT WE STAND FIRMLY BEHIND
OUR CENTRAL AMERICAN FRIENDS. IT IS THEIR CONCERNS AND
INTERESTS THAT SHAPE THE SUBSTANCE OF OUR POLICIES.
CONTADORA IS MERELY A PROCESS THAT MAY OR MAY NOT
EVENTUALLY SUIT OUR INTERESTS.

5. THE GOH'S NIGHTMARE IS ONE OF THE THREE FOLLOWING
EVENTUALITIES OR A COMBINATION THEREOF. FIRST, THEY ARE
APPREHENSIVE ABOUT CONTINUED UNITY OF THE CENTRAL AMERICAN
FOUR, ALTHOUGH THEY ARE ENCOURAGED BY THE SOLIDARITY SHOWN
AT THE RECENT CONTADORA MEETINGS. NONETHELESS, THE CON-
CERN REMAINS THAT, PLACED UNDER SUFFICIENT PRESSURE BY
NICARAGUA AND/OR ONE OR MORE OF THE CONTADORA MEMBERS,
THIS UNITY COULD BE BREACHED. NEXT, GOH FEARS BEING
GANGED UP UPON BY ENTIRE CONTADORA GROUP. IN THIS CONNEC-
TION, GOH WATCHES VENEZUELAN PERFORMANCE VERY CAREFULLY.
GOH HAS PRETTY MUCH WRITTEN OFF MEXICANS AS SUPPORTERS OF
NICARAGUAN POSITION. THEY SEE PANAMANIAN AS WAFFLERS WHO
IN THE END FOLLOW MEXICAN LEAD. AND THEY FIND COLOMBIANS
ERRATIC. SO MUCH DEPENDS, IN THEIR VIEW, ON VENEZUELA
PROVIDING THE NECESSARY COUNTERWEIGHT WITHIN THE CONTADORA
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GROUP. ADDED TO THIS ALREADY PRECARIOUS SITUATION IS THE UNCERTAINTY OF VENEZUELA'S OWN UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. FINALLY, GOH FEARS THAT, IF ALL OTHER STRATAGEMS FAIL, NICARAGUA AS AN ULTIMATE STEP OF DESPERATION, MIGHT ACTUALLY CONDUCT A LIMITED CONVENTIONAL INCURSION INTO HONDURAS AS A WAY OF CAUSING HONDURAS/NICARAGUA RELATIONSHIP TO PRE-EMPT ALL OTHER REGIONAL ISSUES AND REINFORCING ITS BILATERAL THESIS. WE DON'T GIVE AS MUCH CREDENCE TO THIS LAST POSSIBILITY AS THE GOE DOES AND BELIEVE NICARAGUA WOULD HAVE TO WEIGH MANY IMPORTANT DISADVANTAGES TO SUCH A COURSE OF ACTION. NONETHELESS, IT EXISTS AS AN OPTION AND IS VIEWED AS A DISTINCTLY POSSIBLE CHOICE BY GOH AS CLEVER NICARAGUAN WAY TO ACHIEVE INTERNATIONAL BORDER SUPERVISION.

6. IN LOOKING AT THIS ARRAY OF POSSIBILITIES, WE CANNOT RULE OUT PROSPECT THAT AT SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE WE MAY BE CONFRONTED WITH SOME DIFFICULT AND POTENTIALLY UNPOPULAR CHOICES. THERE ARE NUMEROUS PERMUTATIONS CONCEIVABLE; BUT THE BASIC PROPOSITION WILL MOST LIKELY BE THAT HONDURAS (AND PROBABLY EL SALVADOR) FIND THEMSELVES ALONE AMONG THE FOUR IN DEFENSE OF THEIR REGIONAL AND COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH. ALTERNATELY OR AS A VARIANT OF THE FOREGOING, THE CONTADORA FOUR WILL BE UNANIMOUS IN THEIR SUPPORT OF A HONDURAS/NICARAGUA BORDER PATROL AS THE FIRST (AND PROBABLY LAST) STEP IN A REGIONAL PEACE PROCESS. AT THAT POINT, STANDING UP FOR THE SUBSTANCE OF OUR COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL APPROACH WILL PUT US IN CONFLICT WITH THE CONTADORA "PROCESS" WE SAY WE SUPPORT. SUCH AN EVENTUALITY IS AN UNPLEASANT THOUGH NOT UNREALISTIC ONE TO CONTEMPLATE; AND IT BRINGS HOME THE CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE OF OUR SUPPORTING THE CENTRAL AMERICA FOUR, KEEPING VENEZUELA ON BOARD, AND KEEPING TO THE FOREFRONT BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY, TOGETHER WITH AS MUCH SUPPORTING ARGUMENTATION AND FACTS AS POSSIBLE, THE OTHER ELEMENTS OF TENSION IN CENTRAL AMERICA. NEGROPONTE

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