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NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT  
2000

DOCUMENT ID: 53403091  
INQNO: GSCAN1D 00612752  
DOCNO:  
PRODUCER:  
SOURCE: STATE  
DOCTYPE:  
DOR: 19840419  
TOR: 18160000  
DOCPREC: R  
ORIGDATE: 198404191816  
DOCCLASS: C

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STU2404  
OO RUEHC  
DE RUEHLP #2659/01 1101734  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 191732Z APR 84  
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9726  
INFO RUESAS/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 3010  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 2947  
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SR2

\ C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 02659\  
EZ2:

TEXT  
SR3

DIA FOR IR BRANCH; USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD  
E.O. 12356: OADR  
TAGS: PINS, PGOV, MCAF, BL, FR  
SUBJECT: ARRIVAL OF FRENCH ARMS CAUSES INTENSE  
- CONTROVERSY

1. C- ENTIRE TEXT.
2. SUMMARY: A FRENCH GOVERNMENT AIRCRAFT WHICH UNLOADED 2,000 SUBMACHINE GUNS AND OTHER EQUIPMENT IN LA PAZ AND SANTA CRUZ FOR THE GOB MINISTRY OF INTERIOR HAS PROVOKED A SERIOUS REACTION IN THE BOLIVIAN MILITARY AND LOCAL POPULATION, PARTICULARLY IN SANTA CRUZ. THE ARMS, WHICH ARE A FRENCH "GIFT" DATING BACK TO THE KLAUS BARBIE CASE LAST YEAR, HAD BEEN EXPECTED BY THE SILES GOVERNMENT.

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WITH THE ARMED FORCES, AND THE AIR FORCE RETAINS CUSTODY OF THE WEAPONS. TIMING OF THE INCIDENT IS TERRIBLE FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF A SILES ADMINISTRATION UNDER FIRE FROM THE LEFT AND RIGHT FOLLOWING THE ANNOUNCEMENT LAST WEEK BY THE GOB OF A HARSH ECONOMIC AUSTERITY PACKAGE. THE ARMS FIASCO COULD HAVE A FURTHER DESTABILIZING EFFECT ON THE SHAKY SILES GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

3. AN OFFICIAL FRENCH DC-8 CARGO PLANE WHICH UNLOADED ARMS ON APRIL 18 IN BOTH LA PAZ AND SANTA CRUZ FOR THE BOLIVIAN MINISTRY OF INTERIOR HAS CAUSED A STRONG REACTION BY LOCAL CIVIC GROUPS IN SANTA CRUZ AND CONCERN IN THE BOLIVIAN MILITARY.

4. THE ARMS ARE PART OF A SHIPMENT FROM THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT WHICH WAS ARRANGED IN EARLY 1983 BY THEN MINISTER OF INTERIOR MARIO RONCAL AS A GESTURE OF APPRECIATION FOR THE TURNING OVER OF NAZI WAR CRIMINAL **KLAUS BARBIE**. THE ARMS WERE ORIGINALLY DESTINED FOR THE NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT OF THE LEFT (MNRI) PARTY OF PRESIDENT HERNAN SILE HOWEVER, FOLLOWING RONCAL'S REPLACEMENT AS INTERIOR MINISTER IN AUGUST OF LAST YEAR BY FEDERICO ALVAREZ PLATA AND THE NAMING AT THAT TIME OF MANUEL CARDENAS AS DEFENSE MINISTER, AN ARRANGEMENT WAS WORKED OUT FOR THE ARMS TO GO TO THE BOLIVIAN NATIONAL POLICE. ALVAREZ PLATA AND CARDENAS ARE POLITICAL ALLIES IN THE MODERATE "LEGALIST" FACTION OF THE MNRI. THE TWO MINISTERS ALSO AGREED THAT A SHIPMENT OF FRENCH ROCKETS AND ROCKET LAUNCHERS ALSO ORDERED BY RONCAL WOULD BE TURNED OVER TO THE ARMED FORCES.

4. THE FRENCH PLANE REPORTEDLY LANDED FIRST IN SANTA CRUZ AND UNLOADED A PORTION OF THE CARGO DUE TO "TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES". IT THEN FLEW TO LA PAZ AND UNLOADED THE REMAINDER OF THE CARGO AND RETURNED TO SANTA CRUZ. IN SANTA CRUZ SUBSECRETARY OF INTERIOR GUSTAVO SANCHEZ SALAZAR WAS WAITING FOR THE AIRCRAFT. THE PRESENCE OF THE AIRCRAFT AND ITS CARGO WERE DISCOVERED BY MEMBERS OF THE UNION CRUCENISTA JUVENIL (UCJ), A SANTA CRUZ YOUTH MOVEMENT WITH TIES TO THE RIGHT, WHO IMMEDIATELY DENOUNCED THE OCCURRENCE TO THE LOCAL MEDIA. IN BOTH SANTA CRUZ AND LA PAZ, THE ARMS SHIPMENT WAS DETAINED BY AIR FORCE UNITS.

5. MINISTER OF DEFENSE CARDENAS EXPLAINED TO POL/ECON COUNSELOR ON APRIL 19 THAT THE WHOLE THING HAD BEEN BLOWN OUT OF PROPORTION BY THE SANTA CRUZ MEDIA. CARDENAS SAID THE OPERATION WAS COMPLETELY LEGITIMATE AND THE FRENCH DONATION WAS DESTINED FOR THE POLICE. THE SHIPMENT ACCORDING TO THE DEFENSE MINISTER, CONSISTS OF 2,000 9MM SUBMACHINE GUNS, AMMUNITION AND RADIO EQUIPMENT. CARDENAS SAID THAT HE, INTERIOR MINISTER ALVAREZ PLATA AND THE COMMANDER OF THE ARMED FORCES, MGEN. ALFREDO VILLAROEL WENT TO THE LA PAZ AIRPORT TO INSPECT THE SHIPMENT. THE ARMS IN SANTA CRUZ WILL BE BROUGHT TO LA PAZ WHERE THE SHIPMENT WILL BE INVENTORIED BY THE AIR FORCE AND TURNED OVER TO THE POLICE WITH FULL DOCUMENTATION. THE POLICE, ACCORDING TO CARDENAS, WILL RETURN TO THE ARMED FORCES SOME 560 AUTOMATIC WEAPONS LENT FOR THE ANTI-NARCOTICS EFFORT. CARDENAS SAID THAT A SHIPMENT OF 5,000 ROCKETS AND 200 ROCKET LAUNCHERS IS DUE IN A LATER SHIPMENT AND THAT THIS EQUIPMENT WILL BE TURNED OVER TO THE ARMED FORCE

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6. CARDENAS' COOL EXPLANATION BELIES INFO FROM DAO SOURCE THAT ASIDE FROM VILLAROEL THE ARMED FORCES AND PARTICULARL THE AIR FORCE HAD NOT BEEN INFORMED OF THE ARRIVAL OF THE FRENCH AIRCRAFT AND ARMS. AIR FORCE COMMANDER VILLA. RE- DIA FOR IR BRANCH; USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: OADR

TAGS: PINS, PGOV, MCAF, BL, FR

SUBJECT: ARRIVAL OF FRENCH ARMS CAUSES INTENSE CONTROVERSY PORTEDLY WAS EXTREMELY ANGERED BY THE INCIDENT. WE ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT THE MATTER REQUIRED A LATE NIGHT MEETING OF CARDENAS, ALVAREZ PLATA AND VILLAROEL WITH THE PRESIDENT TO DECIDE HOW TO HANDLE PUBLIC EXPLANATION AND THAT ANOTHER MEETING IS TAKING PLACE THIS MORNING.

7. THE AIR FORCE AND ARMY, HOWEVER, ARE SO INCENSED THAT THEY MAY REFUSE TO TURN THE ARMS OVER TO THE POLICE.

8. COMMENT: THE WHOLE SNAFU APPEARS TO BE THE RESULT OF A TOTAL LACK OF COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION BETWEEN THOSE WHO KNEW ABOUT THE ARMS DEAL WITH FRANCE AND THE ARMED FORCES. THE SEEMINGLY CLANDESTINE NATURE OF THE OPE- RATION, SANCHEZ SALAZAR'S INVOLVEMENT (HE IS WIDELY CON- SIDERED WITH REASON TO BE A CUBAN AGENT), THE HISTORY OVER THE PAST YEAR AND A HALF OF ARMS DIVERSIONS, CUBAN TRAINING OF MNRI MILITANTS, THE DETENTION LAST OCTOBER OF 7 GUERRILLAS LINKED TO THE INTERIOR MINISTRY, AND ACTS OF TERRORISM BY MNRI MEMBERS WITH TIES TO THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE ALL CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE OF DEEP SUSPICION. WE ARE QUITE SURE THAT OFFICIAL EXPLANATIONS WILL NOT SWEEP ASIDE THE INTENSE DISTRUST AND THIS EPISODE WILL HAVE FURTHER CHAPTERS. IN PARTICULAR, THE INCIDENT TAKES PLACE AT A TIME OF HEIGHTENED TENSION FOLLOWING THE GOB'S PRO- MULGATION LAST WEEK OF A SET OF SEVERE ECONOMIC MEASURES, A 72-HOUR GENERAL STRIKE BY THE BOLIVIAN LABOR CENTRAL (COB) AND DURING ONGOING NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE GOB AND THE COB. THE SILES GOVERNMENT IS RELYING ON THE SUP- PORT OF THE ARMED FORCES TO DEAL WITH FUTURE LABOR UNREST AND PUBLIC DISORDERS, AND THIS INCIDENT WILL ONLY SERVE TO SHAKE THE FRAGILE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE MILITARY AND COULD HAVE A FURTHER DESTABILIZING EFFECT.

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