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 C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 0086

DIA FOR MG ODOM

EO 12356 : DECL: OADR
 TAGS : MILI, PINT, PEPR, HO, NU
 SUBJ : ODOM VISIT TO NICARAGUA

1. SUMMARY: EIGHTEEN HOUR VISIT TO MANAGUA BY MAJOR GENERAL WILLIAM ODOM WAS MARKED BY LENGTHY COURTESY CALL ON SENIOR SANDINISTA ARMY COMANDANTES INCLUDING ODOM'S OPPOSITE NUMBER JULIO RAMOS AND CHIEF OF STAFF JOAQUIN CUADRA. THE INFORMAL AND FRANK DISCUSSION DURING THE COURTESY CALL CONTINUED AT A SMALL DINNER AT THE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE IN HONOR OF GENERAL ODOM AND OTHER MEMBERS OF HIS PARTY. ODOM HIT SANDINISTAS HARD ON THEIR SUPPORT FOR REVOLUTION IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND TIES WITH CUBA AND THE SOVIET UNION. SANDINISTAS WERE HIGHLY CRITICAL OF ALLEGED U.S. SUPPORT FOR COUNTERREVOLUTIONARIES IN HONDURAS. THEY ALSO INDICATED THEIR DESIRE TO PURSUE SOME FORM OF EFFECTIVE LAND AND SEA JOINT PATROLS WITH POSSIBLE INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION TO DEAL WITH ARMS FLOW TO SALVADOR. SANDINISTA ARMY COMANDANTES MADE CLEAR THEIR DESIRE TO KEEP OPEN LINES OF COMMUNICATION WITH U.S. MILITARY, NOTWITHSTANDING CURRENT SERIOUS POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES IN BILATERAL RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF FOR INTELLIGENCE MAJOR GENERAL WILLIAM ODOM VISITED MANAGUA JANUARY 5/6 AS PART OF HIS FOUR COUNTRY SWING THROUGH CENTRAL AMERICA. IN HIS EIGHTEEN HOUR VISIT, GEN ODOM HAD A COUNTRY TEAM BRIEFING AND THEN WENT TO CALL ON SANDINISTA ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF JOAQUIN CUADRA. ORIGINALLY A CALL ON EPS G-2 COMANDANTE JULIEN RAMOS

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HAD BEEN PLANNED, BUT EPS SUGGESTED CALL ON CUADRA. PRESENT AT THE MEETING IN ADDITION TO CUADRA, AND RAMOS, WERE EPS POLITICAL DIRECTOR HUGO TORRES AND FOREIGN MINISTRY DIRECTOR OF NORTH AMERICAN AFFAIRS SAUL ARANA. ON U.S. SIDE IN ADDITION TO ODOM AND AMBASSADOR WERE DEFATT AND TEGUCIGALPA DEFATT. THE MEETING TOOK PLACE IN THE SITUATION ROOM OF THE SOMOZA BUNKER, NOW THE EPS HEADQUARTERS.

3. GEN ODOM BEGAN THE MEETING BY ASKING CUADRA WHETHER THE EPS HAD ANY PARTICULAR VIEWS IT WISHED TO CONVEY. CUADRA RESPONDED THAT NICARAGUA FIRST WANTED "MATURE AND JUST" RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES BASED ON MUTUAL RESPECT. SECONDLY NICARAGUA WANTED TO CONSTRUCT ITS FUTURE IN PEACE. NICARAGUA, HE SAID, WAS WILLING TO BE FRIENDS WITH THE UNITED STATES AS LONG AS THE U.S. LEFT NICARAGUA IN PEACE.

4. IN RESPONSE GEN ODOM SAID HE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO MAKE TWO POINTS. IN THE LAST TWO ADMINISTRATIONS IT HAD BEEN THE USG'S POSITION TO BE SYMPATHETIC AND HELPFUL TO GENUINE DEMOCRACIES RATHER THAN THOSE FALSE DEMOCRACIES WHICH MERELY MASKED DICTATORSHIPS OF THE EXTREME RIGHT OR LEFT. SECONDLY SINCE WORLD WAR TWO THE U.S. HAD TRIED TO PROMOTE STABILITY IN THE WORLD. WE COULD HAVE GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE GRN IF IT ADOPTED PRO-NICARAGUA POSITIONS RATHER THAN PROMOTING INSTABILITY OR ALLOWING ITSELF TO BECOME A CLIENT OF THE USSR. HE ASKED WHETHER NICARAGUA SOUGHT "REVOLUTION IN ONE COUNTRY" OR PERMANENT REVOLUTION IN LATIN AMERICA.

5. CUADRA, BRISTLING SOMEWHAT, SAID THAT IT WAS FOR NICARAGUA AND ITS PEOPLE ALONE TO GIVE ATTRIBUTIONS TO NICARAGUAN DEMOCRACY. THE NICARAGUAN REVOLUTION WAS A REAL DEMOCRACY, WITH SIMILARITIES TO AS WELL AS DIFFERENCES FROM OTHER REVOLUTIONARY PROCESSES. NICARAGUA TODAY BELONGED TO ALL ITS PEOPLE NOT TO A FAMILY DICTATORSHIP. IF THE REVOLUTION MADE MISTAKES IT WOULD CORRECT THEM. HE HOPED THAT NICARAGUA AND U.S. DEMOCRACIES COULD CONVERGE. CERTAINLY NICARAGUA WANTED PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE WITH THE U.S. AND OTHER COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL AMERICA.

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6. WHEN GEN ODOM ASKED WHETHER THE GRN'S CONCEPT OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE WAS CONSISTENT WITH SENDING ARMS TO THE SALVADORAN GUERRILLAS CUADRA REPLIED THAT THE NICARAGUAN REVOLUTION OBVIOUSLY WAS AN EXAMPLE TO OTHER COUNTRIES. NICARAGUA, HOWEVER, SHOULD NOT BE BLAMED FOR ALL THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CRISES IN THE REGION NOR FOR ALL KINDS OF TERRORISM. NONE OF THE GOVERNMENTS IN THE AREA HAD EVER PROVIDED PROOF OR CONCRETE EVIDENCE THAT THE GRN WAS INVOLVED: INDEED, CUADRA INSISTED, NICARAGUA WAS THE VICTIM COUNTRY. HUNDREDS OF NICARAGUANS WERE DEAD, THAT WAS THE PROOF OF THE INVOLVEMENT OF OUTSIDERS. THE SALVADORAN REVOLUTION WOULD HAVE ITS OWN GESTATION PERIOD. NICARAGUA WANTED A DIALOGUE AND A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION IN SALVADOR AND HAD SAID SO REPEATEDLY IN INTERNATIONAL FORA. CUADRA EMPHATICALLY DENIED THAT ARMS WERE GOING FROM NICARAGUA TO SALVADOR. IF NICARAGUA HAD HELPED THE GUERRILLAS TO THE EXTENT CLAIMED THE SALVADORAN GOVERNMENT WOULD ALREADY HAVE FALLEN. CUADRA ASKED GENERAL ODOM TO TAKE THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE TO SALVADOR AND HONDURAS: NICARAGUA DID NOT INTEND TO INVADE ANYONE; NICARAGUA SOUGHT

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NEGOTIATED SOLUTIONS WITH THEM. CUADRA ADDED THAT THE CURRENT SIZE OF THE SANDINISTA MILITARY, WHILE FOUR TIMES THAT OF SOMOZA, WAS BASED ON THE COMBINED THREAT FROM EL SALVADOR, HONDURAS, GUATEMALA AND THE 7,000 (SIC) EX-NATIONAL GUARDS. THE GRN FEAR, HE SAID, WAS THAT THE PROFESSIONAL MILITARY ESTABLISHMENTS IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES WOULD UNDERESTIMATE THE NICARAGUAN MILITARY BECAUSE OF THE ARMY'S YOUTH AND INEXPERIENCE AND ENGAGE IN A RECKLESS PRESUMPTIVE ATTACK.

7. THE CONVERSATION THEN SHIFTED TO THE ISSUES OF PLURALISM AND A MIXED ECONOMY. CUADRA ASKED COMANDANTE TORRES TO COMMENT. TORRES SAID THAT IT WAS NOT A QUESTION OF WHETHER THERE WOULD BE PLURALISM OR A MIXED ECONOMY IN NICARAGUA. THESE EXISTED AS DID RELIGIOUS FREEDOM. THE GOVERNMENT WAS WILLING TO HELP THE PRIVATE SECTOR PRODUCE; POLITICAL PARTIES FROM THE EXTREME RIGHT TO THE EXTREME LEFT WERE ABLE TO CARRY OUT THEIR ACTIVITIES "PEACEFULLY" (SIC!). HE COMMENTED THAT A POLITICAL PROCESS WHICH PERMITTED POLITICAL COMPETITION WAS NECESSARY.

8. GENERAL ODOM ASKED WHERE THE REVOLUTION WOULD BE IN TEN YEARS TIME. CUADRA SAID A MIXED ECONOMY WAS A PERMANENT PART OF THE REVOLUTION. THE FSLN HAD NO STRATEGIC INTENTION OF DOING AWAY WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR. AN EFFORT WOULD BE MADE TO STRENGTHEN THE STATE SECTOR SO THAT THERE WOULD BE A BETTER BALANCE AND SO THAT THE STATE COULD PLAY A MORE IMPORTANT ROLE IN DIRECTING THE ECONOMY. THE FUNDAMENTAL GOAL OF THE REVOLUTION WAS TO CREATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE.

9. RETURNING TO THE REGIONAL SITUATION, CUADRA SAID THAT NICARAGUA DID NOT CARE WHAT KIND OF REGIME HONDURAS HAD SO LONG AS IT LEFT NICARAGUA ALONE. ODOM ASKED WHETHER TO ACHIEVE THAT GOAL THE GRN WOULD BE WILLING TO STOP ARMS TRAFFICKING. CUADRA RESPONDED THAT THE GRN WANTED JOINT LAND AND SEA PATROLS AND WOULD BE WILLING TO HAVE THIRD COUNTRIES JOIN IN THE PATROLS, EVEN THE U.S. UNFORTUNATELY NO ONE HAD PAID ANY ATTENTION TO THESE PROPOSALS. THE GRN WOULD GO TO ANY LENGTHS TO FIND A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION. THE GRN WAS, HE SAID, VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE INCREASE IN HOSTILITIES AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF HIGH LEVEL HONDURAN OFFICIALS. IT WAS WORRIED BY SALVADORAN AND GUATEMALAN OFFICIAL STATEMENTS THAT THE NICARAGUAN REVOLUTION HAD TO BE EXTERMINATED. NICARAGUA, HE REITERATED, DID NOT WANT TO EXPORT ITS REVOLUTION TO HONDURAS. GENERAL ODOM'S ARRIVAL, HE SAID, HAD BEEN WELCOMED THE DAY BEFORE BY NEW ATTACKS ON THE BORDER. THESE THINGS COULD NOT OCCUR WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF SOME SECTIONS OF THE USG.

10. IN REFLECTING ON WHAT SHOULD BE DONE NEXT CUADRA APPEALED FOR AN "EXTRAORDINARY GESTURE" ON THE PART OF THE UNITED STATES TO PROVIDE AID AND TO HELP NICARAGUA FEED ITS HUNGRY NICARAGUANS. HE SAID, WERE NOT OGRES. THEY DIDN'T EAT CHILDREN. THEY WANTED AN AGREEMENT ON THE BORDER. IF THAT COULD BE ACHIEVED MANY OTHER THINGS WOULD BE POSSIBLE. GENERAL ODOM COMMENTED THAT NICARAGUA WOULD, OF COURSE, HAVE TO CEASE TO ALLOW CUBA TO USE NICARAGUA TO SUPPORT INSURGENCY.

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11. AFTER SOME TWO HOURS THE CONVERSATION WAS BROKEN OFF. IT WAS RESUMED AT DINNER AT THE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE WHERE THE PARTICIPANTS AT THE EARLIER MEETING

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WERE JOINTED ON THE NICARAGUAN SIDE BY CHIEF OF STATE SECURITY LENIN CPA AND ON THE EMBASSIES BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNTRY TEAM. NO NEW GROUND WAS BROKEN IN THE COURSE OF THE EVENING ALTHOUGH THE SANDINISTA MILITARY OFFICERS MADE CLEAR THEY WOULD LIKE TO MAINTAIN CONTACT WITH THE U.S. ARMY, THROUGH VISITS, TRAINING, ETC.

12. COMMENT: THE PARTICIPATION OF COMANDANTE CUADRA AND THREE OTHER SENIOR COMANDANTES GUERRILLEROS IN A DISCUSSION AND SOCIAL EVENT CLEARLY REFLECTED A DECISION AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE FSLN. IN MY TEN MONTHS IN NICARAGUA THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THAT SENIOR REVOLUTIONARY OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN WILLING TO TAKE TIME FOR A FREE WHEELING AND VERY FRANK DISCUSSION OF INTERNAL AND FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES. THE COMANDANTES WERE RELAXED AND OPEN. THEY DID NOT BELABOR ISSUES RELATING TO COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITY, ALTHOUGH WHEN THE SUBJECT DID ARISE THEY REACTED EMOTIONALLY INDICATING THE DEGREE TO WHICH THEY ARE PERSONALLY CAUGHT UP IN MANAGING THE FIGHTING IN THE NORTH. THE CONVERSATIONS WERE REMARKABLY FREE OF MARXIST RHETORIC OR ABUSE OF THE UNITED STATES.

13. FOR THE EMBASSY GENERAL ODOM'S VISIT PROVIDED A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO GET TO KNOW SOME OF THE KEY PLAYERS IN THE SANDINISTA SYSTEM. CUADRA, IS OFTEN SPOKEN OF AS A MAN WHO MIGHT EVENTUALLY RALLY MODERATE FORCES IN THE ARMY AWAY FROM THE CURRENT MARXIST-LENINIST TRENDS. IF SO, HIS WILLINGNESS TO TAKE OVER THE COURTESY CALL ORIGINALLY PLANNED FOR ONE OF HIS SUBORDINATES, TO HOLD THE MEETING IN THE OLD SOMOZA BUNKER AND TO PARTICIPATE IN A PUBLIC SOCIAL GATHERING AT THE RESIDENCE ARE SIGNS OF A DESIRE TO KEEP OPEN CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION TO US. IT ALSO PROVIDED US AN INVALUABLE OCCASION TO ASSESS THESE YOUNG COMANDANTES AND LAY OUT FOR THEM IN CLEAR AND UNMISTAKEABLE TERMS THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF OUR CONCERNS ABOUT NICARAGUAN POLICIES.

QUINTON

END OF MESSAGE

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