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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
26 March 1972

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

El Salvador Situation Report
(As of 1100 EST)

1. The coup attempted by Colonel Mejia against the Sanchez government has collapsed, and government forces are in control. Radio and TV stations have returned to the air and electrical and other services have been restored in the capital city.

2. The coup was instigated by only a small portion of the army, involving only the 1st Brigade and the artillery brigade. The rebels' control of the communications center and brief control of the principal radio stations gave the appearance of wider support than they had actually achieved. President Sanchez was held prisoner for 10 to 12 hours, but was freed unharmed when the El Zapote garrison fell to government forces about 1700 hours yesterday. The San Carlos garrison, the only other rebel stronghold, fell shortly thereafter.

3. The rebellion was initiated by Mejia and his followers, mostly lieutenants and captains, without the knowledge of the leaders of the leftist coalition that lost the recent elections. The temptation to take advantage of the move, however, was apparently too great for the defeated coalition, and Jose Napoleón Duarte, its presidential candidate, went on the radio shortly after noon yesterday urging the people to support the junta. Sanchez, in a TV address in the early morning hours of 26 March, termed Duarte's action irresponsible but said that Duarte, who was captured when the El Zapote garrison fell, and two other civilians involved, could go free if they left the country immediately. No decision has yet been

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made as to the fate of the military personnel involved, but a number of persons are seeking asylum in local embassies. President Sanchez estimated that there had been about 100 killed and 200 wounded on each side.

4. This weekend's bloodletting may have exhausted the strength of those discontented with the outcome of this year's elections, and the limited support within the military for an overthrow of the present government will probably convince the opposition that further resistance is futile. Sanchez and President-elect Molina, who will be inaugurated on 1 July, now have the difficult task of restoring order and public confidence.

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