

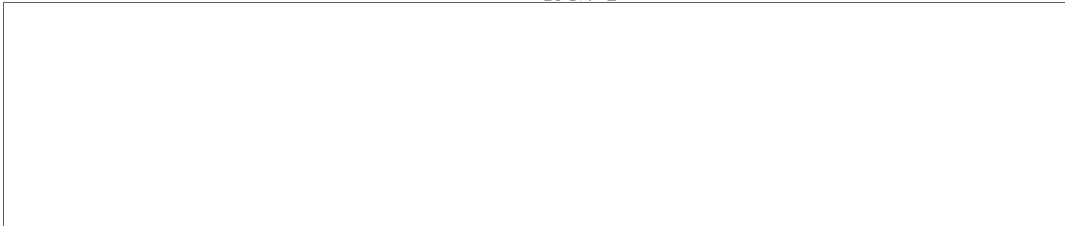
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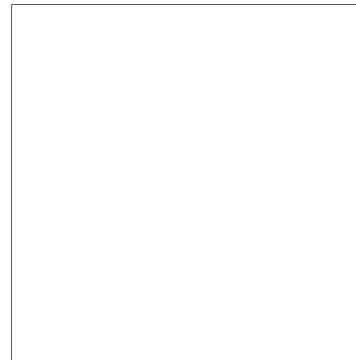
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E.O. 12356: N/A
 TAGS: SCOM, HO, MARR, OREP
 SUBJECT: EMBASSY STATEMENT ON HELICOPTER INCIDENT OF
 APRIL 18 RELEASED 1800 HOURS LOCAL TIME

1. AT APPROXIMATELY 3 PM TODAY, US ARMY UH-1 HELICOPTER MADE A PRECAUTIONARY LANDING IN MARCALA, HONDURAS ABOUT 55 MILES WEST OF TEGUCIGALPA APPROXIMATELY TEN MILES NORTH OF THE BORDER WITH EL SALVADOR. THERE WERE NO INJURIES AMONG THE CREW MEMBERS AND PASSENGERS. THE UH-1 HELICOPTER WAS ONE OF TWO UNARMED HELICOPTERS TRANSPORTING SENATORS J. BENNETT JOHNSTON OF LOUISIANA AND LAWTON CHILES OF FLORIDA AND MEMBERS OF THEIR PARTY ON A VISIT TO THE REFUGEE CAMP AT COLOMONCAGUA, HONDURAS WHEN THE INCIDENT OCCURRED. BOTH SENATORS WERE ON THE HELICOPTER WHICH MADE THE PRECAUTIONARY LANDING.
 2. THE PASSENGERS WERE RETURNED BY HELICOPTER TO THE HONDURAN AIR FORCE BASE AT PALMEROLA AND TO TEGUCIGALPA TO RESUME THEIR ITINERARY. THERE WERE SIX CREW MEMBERS AND NINE PASSENGERS ON THE TWO HELICOPTERS.
 3. A PRELIMINARY REPORT INDICATES THE UH-1 PRECAUTIONARY LANDING WAS MADE AS THE RESULT OF GROUND FIRE WHICH STRUCK THE HELICOPTER AS IT WAS APPROACHING THE REFUGEE CAMP NEAR THE EL SALVADOR BORDER. THE SECOND HELICOPTER ALSO RECEIVED GROUND FIRE BUT WAS NOT HIT.
 4. THE INCIDENT IS UNDER INVESTIGATION.
- NEGROPONTE
 END OF MESSAGE

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