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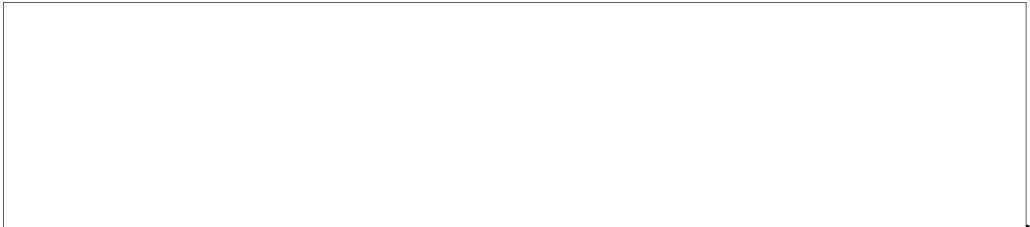
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H PASS TO CONGRESSMAN ASPIN

WHITE HOUSE FOR WILLIAM BALL

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PGOV PREL US, NU
SUBJECT: CONGRESSMAN ASPIN'S MEETINGS WITH JULIO RAMOS AND SERGIO RAMIREZ

1. (S - ENTIRE TEXT)
2. SUMMARY: CHAIRMAN OF THE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE LES ASPIN MET SEPARATELY WITH COMANDANTE JULIO RAMOS AND VICE PRESIDENT RAMIREZ ON APRIL 4. IN A RELATIVELY CANDID CONVERSATION, RAMOS DISCUSSED GON MILITARY CAPABILITIES AND THE GON'S REASONS FOR IMPLEMENTING A STATE OF EMERGENCY. RAMIREZ, IN A LESS CANDID PRESENTATION, DISCUSSED THE CONTADORA PROCESS, THE UPCOMING CENTRAL AMERICAN PRESIDENTS' SUMMIT MEETING AND THE GON ATTITUDES TOWARD THE INTERNAL OPPOSITION AND DIALOGUE WITH THE EXTERNAL OPPOSITION. END SUMMARY JULIO RAMOS
3. ON THE MORNING OF APRIL 4, CONGRESSMAN ASPIN WAS INVITED TO A MEETING WITH COMMANDER OF MANAGUA'S THIRD MILITARY REGION JULIO RAMOS. PER GON REQUEST, OTHER MEMBERS OF THE DELEGATION WERE NOT INCLUDED.
4. IN A FRANK DISCUSSION OF CONTRA ABILITIES, RAMOS SAID THAT SINCE 1982, THE CONTRAS HAD BEEN BASED IN HONDURAS AND ACTIVE IN THE NICARAGUAN DEPARTMENTS OF MATAGALPA, JINOTEGA AND NUEVA SEGOVIA. HE SAID THAT IN 1983-84 THE CONTRAS EXPANDED THEIR OPERATIONS BUT IN 1985 THE EPS HAD BEGUN TO REPEL THEM. HE SAID THE GROUP IN THE SOUTH WAS SMALL AND SINCE MAY 1985 HAD VIRTUALLY BEEN PUSHED OUT OF NICARAGUA. ARDE, HE SAID, WAS NO LONGER A THREAT AND THE GON OBJECTIVE FOR 1986 WAS TO PUSH OUT REMAINING FDN FORCES, SOME OF WHOM ARE STILL ACTIVE IN NICARAGUA'S CENTRAL REGION (CHONTALES).
5. HE SAID MOST RECENTLY, CONTRA ACTIVITY HAD MOVED EAST FROM THE NUEVA SEGOVIA/HONDURAS BORDER AREA TO THE JINOTEGA/HONDURAS BORDER AREA. THOUGH THERE

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WAS STILL SOME ACTIVITY IN NUEVA SEGOVIA, MADRIZ AND NORTHERN CHINANDEGA. TWO MONTHS AGO. HE SAID, THE CONTRA HAD KILLED A SWISS CITIZEN IN NORTHERN CHINANDEGA. HE SAID THE CONTRAS HAD NOT HAD POLITICAL SUCCESS. THAT ONLY IN THE CHONTALES AREA WAS THERE STILL SUPPORT FOR THE CONTRA. HE SAID THE FDN STILL ACTIVE IN CHONTALES AREA WOULD SOON BE CONTAINED. THE GON OBJECTIVE, HE SAID, WAS TO STOP THE FLOW OF SUPPLIES TO THE CONTRA FORCES.

6. KISAN, HE SAID, WAS NO LONGER CAPABLE OF MAJOR MILITARY ACTIVITY EVEN THOUGH IT WAS CURRENTLY TRYING TO STRENGTHEN ITS TIES WITH THE FDN. HE SAID THE INTERNAL DIVISIONS IN THAT ORGANIZATION, WHICH HAD RESULTED IN KISAN'S HAVING HAD SIX DIFFERENT LEADERS IN THE PAST COUPLE OF YEARS, MEANT THAT IT WOULD EVENTUALLY DISAPPEAR.

7. IN WHAT MAY HAVE BEEN A SLIP OF THE TONGUE, RAMOS SAID THAT WITH U.S. AID, WHICH THE CONTRAS WERE GOING TO RECEIVE, THEY WOULD HIT ECONOMIC TARGETS. HE SAID THEY WOULD CHOOSE ECONOMIC TARGETS BECAUSE SUCH TARGETS DO NOT REQUIRE A POLITICAL OR SOCIAL BASE, BUT ADMITTED THE DESTRUCTION OF THOSE TARGETS WOULD HAVE AN IMPORTANT IMPACT.

8. RAMOS SAID THAT THIS YEAR GON FORCES HAD STABILIZED. BOTH ELITE AND CAMPESINO TROOPS, HE SAID, HAD BEEN STRENGTHENED. EVEN THOUGH OUR ECONOMY WAS SUFFERING, HE SAID, THE GOVERNMENT COULD HOLD ON.

9. RAMOS SAID THE FSLN WOULD NEVER ALLOW "FOREIGN MILITARY BASES," IN NICARAGUA. HE SAID THERE WERE SOME 600-700 CUBAN MILITARY ADVISORS IN THE COUNTRY. WHAT HE ASK, HE SAID, WAS A CESSATION OF AGGRESSION. HE SAID THE GON HAD TOLD AMBASSADOR SHLAUDEMAN THAT IT COULD SHOW THAT IT WAS NOT SUPPORTING INSURGENT GROUPS IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. HE SAID THE ONLY STICKING POINT DURING THE MANZANILLO TALKS, HAD BEEN THE GON REFUSAL TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE CONTRA. HE SAID THE FSLN WOULD NEVER NEGOTIATE WITH THE CONTRA BECAUSE TO DO SO WOULD BE TO DOOM THE REVOLUTION. "WE PREFER TO HAVE A U.S. INTERVENTION TO NEGOTIATING WITH THE CONTRA."

10. ON RECRUITMENT, HE SAID THAT SANDINISTA FORCES HAD DRAFTED TENS OF THOUSANDS OF YOUNG MEN SINCE OCTOBER 1983. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE GON HAD LIVED
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WHITE HOUSE FOR WILLIAM BALL

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
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SUBJECT: CONGRESSMAN ASPIN'S MEETINGS WITH JULIO UP TO ITS COMMITMENT TO RELEASE DRAFTEES FROM SERVICE AFTER TWO YEARS OF DUTY. HE SAID DRAFTEES RECEIVED 21 DAYS OF BASIC TRAINING. IN THAT, HE SAID, WE COPIED THE U.S. MODEL, NOT THE CUBAN MODEL, WHICH REQUIRED SIX MONTHS BASIC TRAINING. AFTER BASIC TRAINING, HE SAID, SOLDIERS WERE SENT TO UNITS WHERE THEY SPECIALIZED IN SPECIFIC DUTIES. HE SAID SOLDIERS RECEIVED ONLY A SMALL SUBSIDY WHICH ENABLED THEM TO BUY DRINKS AND CIGARETTES. HE SAID DRAFT AGE WAS 18-25 YEARS FOR ACTIVE DUTY SERVICE AND 25-40 YEARS OF AGE FOR RESERVE UNITS. HE SAID THAT UNDER THE LAW RESERVES COULD BE CALLED UP FOR ONE MONTH'S TRAINING EACH YEAR BUT THEY WOULD NOT NECESSARILY BE CALLED THAT OFTEN. HE SAID THAT SHOULD A MAJOR CALL UP BE NECESSARY, RESERVES

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WOULD BE FUNNELLED INTO THE EXISTING ARMY STRUCTURE IN THE FOLLOWING WAY. HE SAID PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER CADRES OF 60 OFFICERS AND 60 ENLISTED HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED. EACH GROUP OF 3,000 RESERVES WOULD BE CHANNELLED INTO THAT TYPE OF CADRE. RAMOS SAID THAT WITH THOSE ON ACTIVE DUTY, THE RESERVES AND THE MILITIA, THE GON HAD AN ESTIMATED 300,000 MEN PREPARED TO BEAR ARMS. BUT WITH RESERVES AND MILITIA, HE SAID, NICARAGUA COULDN'T INVADE ANOTHER COUNTRY. HE SAID THE ACTIVE DUTY FORCE WAS 70,000 BUT IT WOULD BE REDUCED TO STANDING FORCE OF 50,000 IF THERE WERE NO THREAT FROM THE CONTRAS.

11. RESPONDING TO CONGRESSMAN ASPIN'S REQUEST TO DESCRIBE THE GON'S POLICY OF HOT PURSUIT, RAMOS SAID THE CONTRAS FIRE FROM HONDURAS ALL THE TIME. OFTEN, HE SAID, WE SENT IN MEN TO TAKE OUT A CONTRA FIRING SITE, BUT THE GON HAD NO INTEREST IN HOLDING POSITIONS IN HONDURAS. HE SAID WHEN HIS TROOPS HAD KNOWLEDGE OF CONTRA MOVEMENTS THEY COULD NOT WAIT UNTIL THE CONTRA WERE 50 METERS AWAY BEFORE ACTING; THEY HAD TO TAKE DEFENSIVE ACTIONS EVEN IF THAT MEANT CROSSING THE BORDER. RAMOS SAID THAT A BATALLION COMMANDER IN THE BORDER AREA COULD ON HIS OWN AUTHORITY MOVE NICARAGUAN TROOPS ONE KM INTO HONDURAS IN HOT PURSUIT. TO GO FARTHER, COMMANDERS MUST SEEK GUIDANCE FROM SUPERIOR OFFICERS.

12. IN RESPONSE TO CONGRESSMAN ASPIN'S QUESTION AS TO WHY GON FORCES MOVED INTO HONDURAS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE HOUSE VOTE ON THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL FOR US DOLLS 100 MILLION IN AID TO THE CONTRA, RAMOS SAID THAT JUST BEFORE THE VOTE THE CONTRA INFILTRATED SOME 800 TROOPS UNDER THE COMMAND OF OMAR INTO NORTH SEGOVIA. HE SAID THE EPS HIT OMAR AND HIS FORCES HARD CAUSING SOME 200 CASUALTIES. AN ATTEMPT TO MOVE A SECOND CONTRA UNIT INTO NORTH SEGOVIA WAS NOT SUCCESSFUL. SO ENRIQUE BERMUDEZ, FEARFUL THAT OMAR'S GROUP WOULD BE WIPE OUT, ORDERED A FORCE OF 800-1,000 TROOPS UNDER THE COMMAND OF ARELLANO TO ENTER NICARAGUA THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF JINOTEGA. RAMOS SAID THE EPS WAS AWARE OF BERMUDEZ'S PLANS TO ENTER NICARAGUA IN THAT AREA BUT IT HAD NOT UNDERTAKEN A PRE-EMPTIVE STRIKE. HE SAID THAT THE EPS HAD CHASED THE CONTRAS SOME FOUR OR FIVE KMS INTO HONDURAS. OUR GENERAL GUIDELINE, HE SAID, WAS THAT THE EPS TROOPS SHOULD NOT GO BEYOND ITS ARTILLERY RANGE. HE SAID THAT DISTANCE WAS FOUR OR FIVE KMS. RAMOS SAID THE EPS HAS A STRONG FORCE OF 8,000 TROOPS ALONG THE JINOTEGA BORDER AREA WITH HONDURAS. HE SAID HE WAS NOT SURE HOW MANY OF THOSE TROOPS WERE IN THE FRONT LINES AND IN HONDURAN TERRITORY DURING LAST WEEK'S ENCOUNTER. HE SAID IT WAS NOT A STRIKE BUT A MAJOR ENCOUNTER. EPS SMALL UNITS HAD ATTACKED THE REARGUARD OF THE CONTRA.

13. CONGRESSMAN ASPIN ASKED IF RAMOS BELIEVED CONGRESS WOULD APPROVE THE PRESIDENT'S CONTRA AID PROPOSAL. RAMOS SAID THAT'S WHAT THE GON WAS WAITING TO HEAR BUT THE CONGRESSMAN SHOULD KNOW THAT US DOLLS 100 MILLION "WOULD ONLY PROLONG THE AGONY." THE FUNDS MIGHT PROVIDE THE CONTRA WITH EQUIPMENT BUT THEY WOULD NOT BRING MORE MEN OR GIVE THE CONTRA A POLITICAL BASE. HE SAID THE CONTRA HAD POPULAR SUPPORT ONLY IN CHONTALES. HE ADMITTED THAT IN 1983 THEY HAD SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT IN JINOTEGA AND NUEVA SEGOVIA, BUT, HE SAID, SUCCESSFUL EPS MILITARY ACTIONS AND FOLLOWUP POLITICAL WORK HAD RESULTED IN SERIOUS DETERIORATION OF SUPPORT. HE SAID THE CONTRA COULD HIT URBAN AND ECONOMIC TARGETS

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WHITE HOUSE FOR WILLIAM BALL

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SUBJECT: CONGRESSMAN ASPIN'S MEETINGS WITH JULIO BUT THAT WOULDN'T GAIN THEM POLITICAL SUPPORT. WE HAVE COMMITTED POLITICAL ERRORS, SAID RAMOS, BUT NOW WE'RE BEGINNING TO DO THINGS RIGHT AND THE DRAFT IS SUCCESSFUL. FOR THE CONTRAS PART, THEY HAVE NO POLITICAL BASE AND THEIR MILITARY DEFEATS HAVE DEMORALIZED THEIR SUPPORTERS.

14. IN RESPONSE TO CONGRESSMAN ASPIN'S QUESTION OF WHY THE STATE OF EMERGENCY WAS NECESSARY IN OCTOBER 1985 IF THE CONTRA WERE LOSING, RAMOS SAID THE STATE OF EMERGENCY WAS DESIGNED TO DEAL WITH THE INTERNAL FRONT, NOT WITH THE CONTRAS. HE SAID THE GON HAD MADE AN ERROR IN LIFTING RESTRICTIONS DURING THE ELECTORAL PROCESS AND THAT THE LACK OF RESTRICTIONS HAD PERMITTED THE CONTRA TO DEVELOP INTERNAL SUPPORT. NICARAGUA MUST BE ONE OF THE FEW COUNTRIES NOT TO HAVE IMPOSED MORE SERIOUS RESTRICTIONS AT A TIME WHEN IT WAS LOSING MEN. HE SAID THE EPS HAD 1500 DEAD LAST YEAR. HE SAID THE CONTRA WERE DISINTEGRATING AND THE STATE OF EMERGENCY WOULD GUARANTEE ITS STRATEGIC DEFEAT. HE SAID WHETHER OR NOT THE STATE OF EMERGENCY WOULD BE CONTINUED NEXT OCTOBER DEPENDED ON THE CONTRA. HE SAID THE CONTRA WERE LOSING AND ONLY A DIRECT U.S. INTERVENTION WOULD ACCOMPLISH THE U.S. ENDS. HE ADMITTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN A POLITICAL COST TO THE STATE OF EMERGENCY, BUT, HE SAID, "THE REVOLUTION WAS STRONG. WE HAVE INTERNAL SUPPORT AND A JUST POSITION." HE SAID, "TALK TO THE JOURNALISTS WHO TRAVEL UP NORTH. THEY WILL TELL YOU OUR TROOPS' MORALE IS HIGH EVEN THOUGH THEIR BOOTS HAVE HOLES AND THEIR CLOTHES ARE RAGGED; THEY STAY IN THE MOUNTAINS AND FIGHT." HE SAID PEOPLE COMPLAIN ABOUT THE ABSENCE OF BASIC FOODSTUFFS, BUT IF CALLED THEY WOULD GO WILLINGLY. HE THEN NOTED THAT MOST PEOPLE WERE NOT AFFECTED BY THE STATE OF EMERGENCY. THERE WAS, AFTER ALL, NO CURFEW.

15. AS TO WHY THE GON HAS SO MANY TANKS, RAMOS SAID THAT IN 1981 AND 1982 THE GON WAS SIMPLY TRYING TO BUILD A REGULAR ARMY. WHAT WAS RECEIVED FROM THE SOVIETS WERE RECONSTRUCTED T-55 TANKS. HE SAID THE TANKS WERE IN SUCH POOR CONDITION THAT SOMETIMES THEY HAD TO BE PUSHED WITH TRACTORS IN ORDER TO GET THEM STARTED. IN NO WAY DID THE GON'S TANK FORCE COMPARE WITH HONDURAS'S TANK FORCE OF MODERN SCORPIONS. HE SAID. WITH THE U.S. AGGRESSION WE HAD CHANGED OUR ARMS ACQUISITION EMPHASIS, HE SAID. NOW THE GON SOUGHT MORTARS, ARTILLERY AND ANTI-AIRCRAFT WEAPONS. HE SAID 50,000 - 100,000 AUTOMATIC RIFLES WERE URGENTLY NEEDED AND THE GON WOULD GET THEM WHEREVER THEY COULD. EVEN ALL OF THAT WON'T HELP US, HE SAID, IF THE U.S. INVADED. "IF LIBYA'S SAM-5'S DIDN'T WORK, OUR SAM-7'S WON'T EITHER."

SERGIO RAMIREZ

16. CONGRESSMAN ASPIN MET ON APRIL 4 WITH VICE PRESIDENT SERGIO RAMIREZ. PER GON REQUEST, OTHER MEMBERS OF THE DELEGATION DID NOT ATTEND THE MEETING. A LARGE NUMBER OF LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL PRESS FOLLOWED THE CONGRESSMAN TO HIS MEETING WITH RAMIREZ BUT THE CONGRESSMAN REFUSED TO MAKE ANY STATEMENTS EITHER BEFORE OR AFTER THE MEETING.

17. RAMIREZ OPENED THE MEETING BY PROVIDING THE CONGRESS-

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MAN WITH HIS OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT SITUATION IN NICARAGUA. RAMIREZ SAID THE GON HAD "GOOD HOPE." HE NOTED THAT THE GON HAD RECENTLY SIGNED A BORDER AGREEMENT WITH COSTA RICA AND WAS WORKING TO REACH A SIMILAR AGREEMENT WITH HONDURAS. THE BORDER WITH HONDURAS, HE SAID, WAS NICARAGUA'S "HOTTEST SPOT NOW." IT WAS TO THE GON'S ADVANTAGE, HE SAID, THAT HONDURAS DID NOT WANT A MILITARY CONFRONTATION. HE SAID RECENT HONDURAN STATEMENTS WHICH HAD BEEN QUOTED IN THE APRIL 4 WASHINGTON POST, LED THE GON TO BELIEVE ITS CURRENT CRISIS WITH HONDURAS WOULD BE OVERCOME. HE SAID THE GON UNDERSTOOD THE FACT OF LIFE THAT THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN HONDURAS INFLUENCED HONDURAN DECISION-MAKING. BECAUSE OF THE U.S., HE SAID, HONDURAN PRESIDENT AZCONA MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO NEGOTIATE AS COMPREHENSIVELY AS HE DESIRED. BUT RAMIREZ BELIEVED PERMANENT CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES WOULD BE MAINTAINED. (RAMIREZ AT THIS POINT APPARENTLY WAS REFERRING TO CHANNELS WHICH DID NOT NECESSARILY INVOLVE THE TWO COUNTRIES' RESPECTIVE DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS. HE SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED THE

H PASS TO CONGRESSMAN ASPIN

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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: PGOV PREL US, NU

SUBJECT: CONGRESSMAN ASPIN'S MEETINGS WITH JULIO HONDURAN MINISTER OF ENERGY AS ONE OF THOSE INVOLVED IN FACILITATING COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.) RAMIREZ SAID THAT AZCONA'S ANNOUNCEMENT THAT HE HAD SPOKEN WITH DANIEL ORTEGA WAS A DELIBERATE AND WELL THOUGHT OUT HONDURAN ACT DESIGNED TO GAIN INTERNAL SUPPORT FOR AZCONA. HE SAID IT WAS IN PART NECESSARY BECAUSE OF THE DISGUST THE HONDURAN PEOPLE FELT FOR THE CONTRAS AFTER THEY MURDERED A CANADIAN PRIEST. 19. RAMIREZ DESCRIBED THE UPCOMING SUMMIT OF CENTRAL AMERICAN PRESIDENTS TO BE HELD IN ESQUIFULAS, GUATEMALA IN MAY AS A CULMINATION OF A REGIONAL DIPLOMATIC PROCESS. IN PREPARATION FOR THAT SUMMIT MEETING, HE SAID, CENTRAL AMERICAN FOREIGN MINISTERS WOULD MEET ON APRIL 10 AND 11 AND CENTRAL AMERICAN VICE PRESIDENTS WOULD MEET IN GUATEMALA ON APRIL 22 AND 23. HE SAID THE TASK OF THE VICE PRESIDENTS WOULD BE TO AGREE ON THE FINAL DOCUMENT WHICH WOULD BE RELEASED AT THE SUMMIT MEETING. HE SAID IN THIS CENTRAL AMERICAN EFFORT THE GON SHARED WITH VENIZIO CEREZO THE THESIS THAT IT WAS AN IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS AND SEEK SOLUTIONS.

19. NICARAGUA'S GREATEST DIFFICULTY, SAID RAMIREZ, WAS ITS BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE USG. HE SAID HE DID NOT SEE MANY DIPLOMATIC OR POLITICAL SOLUTIONS, BUT THAT THE GON BELIEVED IT HAD AN OBLIGATION TO CONTINUE TO SEARCH FOR A SOLUTION. BILATERAL RELATIONS WOULD BE MADE MORE DIFFICULT, HE SAID, IF THE CONTRAS RECEIVED NEW U.S. AID. IT WAS THE GON'S FEAR, HE SAID, THAT IF THE U.S. PUT ITS OWN HELICOPTERS AND ADVISORS INTO THE BORDER AREA, EVENTUALLY EITHER A HELICOPTER WOULD BE SHOT DOWN OR AN ADVISOR KILLED. THAT EVENTUALITY, HE SAID, COULD QUICKLY ESCALATE OUT OF CONTROL AND LEAD THE U.S. INTO ANOTHER VIETNAM. HE SAID THAT DURING THE BORDER CRISIS, U.S. HELICOPTERS HAD FLOWN HONDURAN TROOPS INTO THE BORDER AREA, RAISING "THE THRESHOLD OF CONFLICT."

20. COMMENTING ON THE CONTADORA FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING NOW TAKING PLACE IN PANAMA, RAMIREZ SAID THE GON WOULD NOT TALK ABOUT SIGNING THE CONTADORA ACT.

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THE GON'S SHORT TERM AIM, HE SAID, WOULD BE TO SEEK PRACTICAL AGREEMENTS ON CONCRETE POINTS. REFERRING TO ARGENTINE PRESIDENT ALFONSIN'S STATEMENTS TO SPEAKER O'NEILL, RAMIREZ SAID THERE WAS LATIN AMERICAN SUPPORT FOR THE IDEA THAT A MULTI-LATIN AMERICAN FORCE BE PUT INTO THE HONDURAS/NICARAGUA BORDER AREA. HE SAID THE GON HAD DISCUSSED THAT PROPOSAL WITH ALFONSIN AND HAD TOLD ALFONSIN THAT IT COULD BE A PRACTICAL MEASURE.

21. RESPONDING TO CONGRESSMAN ASPIN'S QUESTION ON THE SIX-PARTY DOCUMENT, RAMIREZ FIRST PRETENDED THAT HE WAS NOT SURE TO PRECISELY WHICH DOCUMENT THE CONGRESSMAN WAS REFERRING. ONCE THE DOCUMENT HAD BEEN PROPERLY IDENTIFIED IN HIS MIND, HE SAID THE PROBLEM WITH THAT DOCUMENT, AS WITH ITS INTERNAL OPPOSITION GROUP SIGNERS, WAS THAT IT WAS LINKED TO THE CONTRA. "I'M NOT PARANOID," HE SAID, "BUT THAT DOCUMENT REFLECTS THE DEMANDS OF THE CONTRA." RAMIREZ SAID HE HAD JUST DISCUSSED WITH CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC INTERNATIONAL VISITORS FROM SPAIN THE POSSIBILITY OF AN INTERNAL DIALOGUE. HE SAID HE HAD EXPLAINED THAT WHAT WAS IMPORTANT NOW WAS THE PROMULGATION OF NICARAGUA'S NEW CONSTITUTION-- IN THAT CONSTITUTION THE RULES WOULD BE DEFINED. HE SUGGESTED THAT OPPOSITION PARTIES SHOULD TURN THEIR ATTENTION TO SUPPORTING AND COMMENTING ON THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY'S DRAFT CONSTITUTION. HE SAID HE KNEW THE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN PARTY HAD DRAFTED ITS OWN CONSTITUTION BUT THAT THAT WAS A MEANINGLESS ACT. IT WAS THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY'S VERSION THAT COUNTED, HE SAID, AND PARTIES SHOULD TURN THEIR ATTENTION TO ADDRESSING THEIR POINTS OF CONCERN ON THAT DOCUMENT DURING THE UPCOMING TOWN MEETINGS. HE POINTED OUT THAT ALL PARTIES HAD HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK OUT IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BEFORE THE DRAFT WAS DRAWN UP. NONE, NOT IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, HE SAID, HAD PARTICIPATED IN THAT PROCESS. HE SAID KEY ISSUES IN THE CONSTITUTION WERE: WHETHER NICARAGUA WOULD HAVE A ONE-PARTY SYSTEM; SEPARATION OF POWERS; THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND THE ROLE OF THE ARMY. APPROVING THE CONSTITUTION, HE SAID, WAS SOMETHING THAT HAD TO BE DONE CAREFULLY. "FOR IT WAS A CONSTITUTION THAT HAD TO LAST FOR MANY YEARS."

22. RESPONDING TO CONGRESSMAN ASPIN'S QUESTION ON THE SECRET SECTION 05 OF 05 MANAGUA 02197

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WHITE HOUSE FOR WILLIAM BALL

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
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SUBJECT: CONGRESSMAN ASPIN'S MEETINGS WITH JULIO GON ATTITUDE TOWARD NEGOTIATING WITH THE ARMED OPPOSITION, RAMIREZ SAID THE POINT WAS WHETHER NEGOTIATORS HAD TIES WITH THE CIA AND THE REPUBLICAN ADMINISTRATION. IF WE FOUND AN INDEPENDENT LEADER WHO HAD NO SUCH TIES THEN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THAT INDIVIDUAL MIGHT BE POSSIBLE, HE SAID. HE CITED AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE GON'S WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE, ITS DISCUSSIONS WITH BROOKLYN RIVERA. HE ALSO SUGGESTED THAT ANY CONTRA LEADER, INCLUDING THOSE IN UNO, COULD, UNDER NICARAGUA'S AMNESTY LAW, RETURN TO NICARAGUA AND REINTEGRATE INTO THE SYSTEM.

23. ASKED ABOUT COMANDANTE BORGE'S HEALTH, RAMIREZ SAID BORGE EACH MORNING SWAM THREE MILES IN JILOA LAGOON. IF COMANDANTE BORGE HAD NOT BEEN VISIBLE IN THE LAST FEW DAYS, HE SAID, IT WAS BECAUSE HIS WIFE WAS ABOUT TO GIVE BIRTH. RAMIREZ SAID RUMORS SUCH AS THAT REGARDING BORGE'S HEALTH WERE SPREAD BY THE CIA. AS CAPTURED

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MINT LT. AGUADO TOLD US, HE SAID, THE CIA'S OBJECTIVE WAS TO CREATE A SPLIT WITHIN THE NATIONAL DIRECTORATE. WE WERE VERY CONCERNED, HE SAID, THAT ONE OF OUR LEADERS WOULD BE ASSASSINATED BY THE CIA WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF USING THAT ASSASSINATION TO CREATE A SPLIT IN THE NATIONAL DIRECTORATE. ADMITTING THAT A SPLIT IN THE NATIONAL DIRECTORATE WOULD BE "THE ONE WAY" TO DEPOSE THE FLSN SHORT OF INTERVENTION, RAMIREZ SAID THERE WAS ABSOLUTELY NO CHANCE THAT A SPLIT WOULD OCCUR. HE SAID THE NATIONAL DIRECTORATE WAS SO AWARE OF THE CIA INTENT IT WENT TO GREAT LENGTHS TO MAINTAIN CONSENSUS. HE SAID PRESENT REPORTS IN HONDURAS OF DIVISIONS BETWEEN TOMAS BORGE AND DANIEL ORTEGA WERE UNTRUE.

24. AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING, RAMIREZ SAID THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE U.S. HAD DOUBTS ABOUT NICARAGUA. THOSE DOUBTS, HE SAID, COULD NOT BE RESOLVED WITH WORDS. HE URGED CONGRESSMAN ASPIN TO RETURN IN FIVE, TEN OR TWENTY YEARS. THEN, HE SAID, YOU WILL SEE OUR DEMOCRACY AND PERHAPS WE COULD HAVE A DIFFERENT TYPE OF CONVERSATION. PERHAPS, HE SAID, NICARAGUA WOULD BE EVEN MORE DEMOCRATIC THAN THE U.S. HE SAID THE CHOICE BY AMERICAN VOTERS OF AN "ULTRA-RIGHT PRESIDENT" DID NOT STRIKE HIM AS DEMOCRATIC AND WAS WORRISOME TO THE GON. HE SAID IT WAS NOT GOOD FOR A SOCIETY TO HAVE A PRESIDENT "WHO LIES SO MUCH."

25. CONGRESSMAN ASPIN RESPONDED THAT EVEN IN FIVE, TEN OR TWENTY YEARS HE AND RAMIREZ PROBABLY WOULD STILL HAVE A DIFFERENT VIEW ON THE MEANING OF DEMOCRACY. HE SAID PRESIDENT REAGAN WAS THE CLEAR CHOICE OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND THAT THE GON SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT. HE SAID THE AMERICAN PEOPLE MADE THEIR CHOICE BASED ON A BROAD SPECTRUM OF ISSUES AND THAT NICARAGUA HAD NOT BEEN A KEY ISSUE IN THE MINDS OF MOST VOTERS. EVEN IN THE 1982 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, SAID THE CONGRESSMAN, NICARAGUA WAS UNLIKELY TO BE A KEY ISSUE UNLESS AMERICAN SERVICEMEN WERE INVOLVED IN THE AREA. BERGOLD

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