

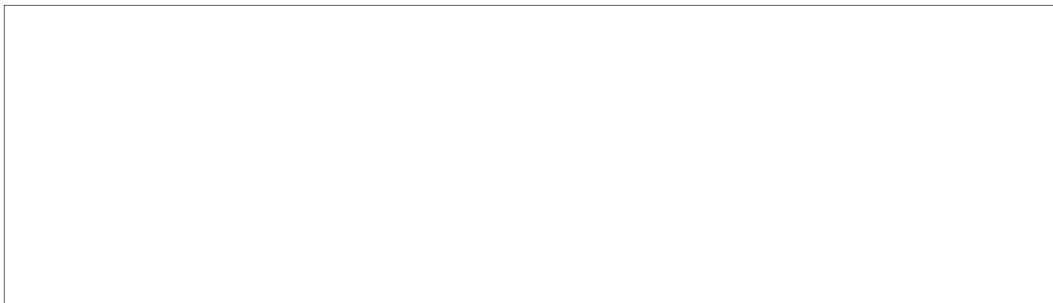
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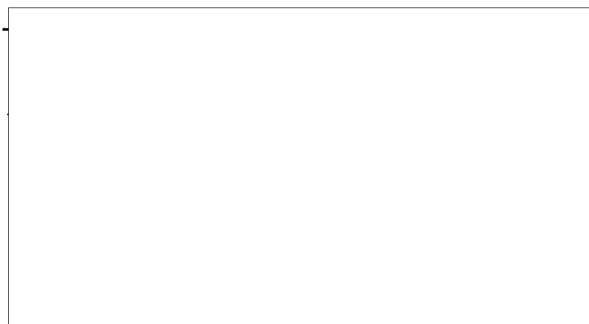
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 TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7643  
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 RUEHSJ/AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE 7373  
 RUEHSN/AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR 8008  
 RUEHTG/AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA 7766  
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 C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 3626



ED 12356: DECL: 8-18-89  
 TAGS: OVIP MOPS NU HU ES  
 SUBJECT: CODEL WILSON: BRIEFING ON THE MILITARY SITUATION

1. CONFIDENTIAL-ENTIRE TEXT.
2. SUMMARY: SENATOR WILSON WAS BRIEFED BY COMANDANTE ANTENOR ROSALES ON THE MILITARY SITUATION CONFRONTING NICARAGUA. ACCORDING TO ROSALES, THE COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY FORCES DO NOT REPRESENT A THREAT TO THE REVOLUTION, AND THE GRN COULD CONTINUE TO DEAL WITH THEM, THOUGH AT HIGH COST. ROSALES SAID THAT THE GRN HAD THE ABILITY TO ARM 50,000 MEN, AND PLANNED TO BUILD ITS DEFENSIVE ARMY TO THAT NUMBER. HE STATED THAT THE MILITARY CONSCRIPTION ACT WAS FOR THE PURPOSE OF GETTING EVERYONE INTO THE MILITIA, AND THAT ONLY 200 CUBAN MILITARY ADVISORS WERE IN THE COUNTRY. THE INSURGENCY IN EL SALVADOR WAS IN NO WAY DIRECTED FROM NICARAGUA, HE ASSERTED, ALTHOUGH THE GRN ACKNOWLEDGED ITS SOLIDARITY WITH THE SALVADORAN REVOLUTIONARIES. END SUMMARY.
3. SENATOR PETE WILSON AND AMBASSADOR QUANTON WERE BRIEFED AUGUST 11 BY NICARAGUAN ARMY CHIEF OF OPERATIONS, COMANDANTE ANTENOR ROSALES, ABOUT THE CURRENT MILITARY SITUATION IN NICARAGUA. ROSALES PROVIDED THE SENATOR WITH A MAP UPON WHICH HAD BEEN OUTLINED THE AREAS OF COMBAT OPERATIONS OF THE COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY FORCES. THE MAJOR REAS WERE ALONG THE NORTHERN BORDER, ALONG THE SOUTHERN BORDER, SCATTERED ON THE EAST COAST, AND IN THE INTERIOR THROUGH JINOTEGA TO THE MATAGALPA REGION. THE MAP ALSO SHOWED WHERE CONTRA BASES WERE SAID TO BE IN HONDURAS AND IN COSTA RICA.
4. ROSALES REPORTED THAT THE CONTRAS USED HIT AND RUN TACTICS AGAINST THE NICARAGUAN FORCES, BUT THAT THEY

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DID NOT REPRESENT A DANGER TO THE REVOLUTION NOTWITH-  
STANDING THEIR IMPROVED ARMAMENTS, FOREIGN AID,  
AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT. HE SAID THAT UNFORTUNATELY  
THE NICARAGUANS WERE FORCED TO DIVERT RESOURCES FROM  
HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND OTHER AREAS TO PROVIDE FOR  
DEFENSE.

5. ROSALES SPOKE BRIEFLY ON CONTRA CAPABILITIES. HE  
SAID THAT THE CONTRAS HAD MILITARY EXPERIENCE. THEY  
WERE WELL ARMED AND TRAINED, HAD A COHERENT IDEOLOGY  
(ANTI-COMMUNISM) AND A SANCTUARY IN HONDURAS FROM WHICH  
TO OPERATE. ALTHOUGH THEIR MORALE WAS GOOD THEY HAD  
SUFFERED MANY LOSSES AND WERE FATIGUED. HE CLAIMED  
THAT THEIR MAJOR PROBLEM WAS ONE OF LOGISTICS AS THE  
TERRAIN MADE IT DIFFICULT TO RESUPPLY THEIR AREAS OF  
OPERATION. ROSALES REITERATED THAT THE  
CONTRAS WERE NOT A THREAT, AS EVIDENCED BY THE FACT  
THAT THEY HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO CONTROL ONE BIT OF  
TERRAIN, OR TAKE AND HOLD A STRETCH OF ROAD FOR MORE  
THAN SIX HOURS. ON THE OTHER HAND, ROSALES SAID THAT  
BECAUSE OF THE ROUGH TERRAIN AND THEIR SANCTUARY  
IT WAS VERY DIFFICULT TO ANNIHILATE THOSE FORCES.

6. DISCUSSING FOREIGN MILITARY AID TO NICARAGUA AND  
THE GRN'S ABILITY TO DEAL WITH THE CONTRAS, ROSALES  
SAID THAT THE SANDINISTA MILITARY WAS IN NEED OF MORE  
HELICOPTERS, BECAUSE THE FEW MI-8'S AND ALLOUETTES  
THEY HAD WERE NOT ENOUGH TO FIGHT THAT TYPE OF BATTLE.  
ROSALES CLAIMED THAT THE ARMY HAD U.S., FRENCH, AND SOVIET  
HELICOPTERS AND SOME FOREIGN TECHNICIANS, AND  
WAS VERY FIRM IN STATING THAT THERE WERE ONLY 200  
CUBAN MILITARY ADVISORS.

7 ROSALES CLAIMED THAT THERE WAS A GREAT DIFFERENCE  
BETWEEN THE MILITARY SITUATION OF NICARAGUA AND  
EL SALVADOR, WHERE THE ARMY HAD A STRONG REAR ECHELON  
OF TROOPS, AND WHERE THE INSURGENTS OPERATED  
COMPLETELY WITHIN EL SALVADOR'S BORDERS. THERE, HE SAID,  
THE ARMY WAS CONDUCTING THE WAR, WHEREAS IN NICARAGUA  
THE GOVERNMENT USED MILITIAS AND RESERVES TO DO THE  
FIGHTING. THE COMANDANTE SAID THAT THOSE GROUPS HAD  
BEEN THE ONES TO CARRY MOST OF THE WEIGHT OF THE WAR,  
AND THAT THE RATIONALE FOR THIS WAS TWOFOLD: FIRST,  
BECAUSE MILITIAS AND RESERVES WERE ORGANIZED IN A  
TERRITORIAL MANNER, THUS THEY COULD OPERATE WHERE THEY  
LIVED; AND SECOND, THE REGULAR FORCES OF THE  
ARMY WERE BEING USED TO DEFEND MAJOR STRATEGIC AND  
POPULATED AREAS SUCH AS MANAGUA.

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8. ACCORDING TO ROSALES, THE PATRIOTIC MILITARY SERVICE  
LAW CONSISTED OF TWO PHASES: REGISTRATION AND  
CONSCRIPTION. IT WOULD PROVIDE THE GRN WITH THE  
ABILITY TO ORGANIZE AND PREPARE THE PEOPLE FOR ENTRY  
INTO THE ARMY. THE MILITIA WOULD ALWAYS HAVE TO BE  
10 TO 20 TIMES AS LARGE AS THE REGULARS IN ORDER TO  
DEFEND THE COUNTRY. THE PROPOSED LAW MEANT THAT ALL  
NICARAGUANS WOULD BE OBLIGED TO DEFEND THE FATHERLAND.  
IN ITS IMPLEMENTATION, ROSALES SAID THAT NICARAGUA  
WOULD THEN HAVE THE CAPACITY TO DEFEND AND RESIST ATTACK  
FROM ANY COUNTRY. ROSALES STATED THAT THERE WAS NO PLAN  
TO BUILD AN OFFENSIVE ARMY BECAUSE THERE WERE NOT ENOUGH  
RESOURCES TO CONSTRUCT IT, AND BECAUSE AN ARMY IN AND  
OF ITSELF WOULD NEVER BE ABLE TO DEFEND THE REVOLUTION.

10. THE SALVADORAN INSURGENTS, ROSALES STATED, HAD A

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JUST CAUSE, AND NICARAGUA WOULD NOT BREAK RELATIONS WITH THEM. HOWEVER, THERE SHOULD BE NEGOTIATIONS FOR A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO AVOID A DIRECT MILITARY CONFRONTATION. HE SAID THAT THE FMLN GUERRILLAS WERE NOT DIRECTED FROM NICARAGUA, AS COMMANDERS HAD TO BE CLOSE TO THE BATTLE FRONT. WHILE THE CHARGE HAD BEEN MADE, THERE HAD NEVER BEEN ANY PROOF OF IT OR OF THE ALLEGED ARMS TRAFFIC TO EL SALVADOR.

11. THE ARMY'S PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER, SUB-COMMANDANTE SANCHEZ (WHO ALSO ATTENDED THE MEETING), ADDED THAT THE CONTRAS WERE A SPEARHEAD FOR A WAR WHICH NICARAGUA WAS EXPECTING AND PREPARING FOR. HE INSISTED THAT THE NICARAGUAN ARMY WAS ONLY CAPABLE OF RESISTING COMPARABLE FORCES IN THE AREA, AND THAT THE ARMY WAS CONVINCED THAT IT DID NOT NEED CUBAN ASSISTANCE TO CONFRONT ANY OTHER COUNTRY.

12. COMMENT: ROSALES WAS ANXIOUS TO CAST THE NICARAGUAN ARMY AS SOLELY DEFENSIVE IN NATURE, AND TO SHOW THAT THE CONTRAS WERE NOT A MILITARY THREAT TO THE GRN'S POWER. AS A SIGN OF HIS GOOD WILL TO THE SENATOR, ROSALES GAVE HIM THE MILITARY BRIEFING MAP ANNOTATED WHERE THE CONTRA OPERATIONS WERE SAID TO BE TAKING PLACE. OF SPECIAL NOTE WAS HIS COMMENT ON THE TOTAL PARTICIPATION OF THE PEOPLE IN THE ARMY WHICH ONCE AGAIN DEMONSTRATED THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE FSLN SEES THE ARMY AS AN INSTRUMENT OF POPULAR MOBILIZATION AND INDOCTRINATION. END COMMENT.

QUINTON  
END OF MESSAGE

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