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TEXT
E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PREL, AR, US
SUBJECT: VICE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER
CAPUTO
REF: (A) 89 STATE 47475
1. (C - ENTIRE TEXT).
2. SUMMARY. ARGENTINE FOREIGN MINISTER CAPUTO CALLED ON
VICE PRESIDENT QUAYLE FEBRUARY 14 IN THE LATTER'S OFFICE
IN THE OLD EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING. MOST OF THE
CONVERSATION FOCUSSED ON WHAT CAPUTO DESCRIBED AS THE MAIN
REASON HE ASKED FOR THE MEETING: TO ELICIT ONE MORE TIME
FROM THE USG AN EXPRESSION OF SUPPORT FOR ARGENTINE
DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW AGAINST ENEMIES OF THE FAR
RIGHT AND FAR LEFT. SUCH WAS THE FRAGILE BALANCE IN
ARGENTINA TODAY THAT SUCH CONTINUED U.S. BACKING WAS
CRITICAL. THE VICE PRESIDENT REITERATED THE UNEQUIVOCAL
SUPPORT OF THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION FOR THE CONTINUITY OF
ARGENTINE DEMOCRACY, FOR THE RULE OF LAW, AND FOR
DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES AS THE BASIS FOR POLITICAL STABILITY
THROUGHOUT THE HEMISPHERE. PRESIDENT BUSH HAD MADE THAT
CLEAR IN A LETTER HE HAD JUST SIGNED TO PRESIDENT
ALFONSIN. TURNING TO THE RECENT LEFTWING ATTACK ON THE
TABLADA MILITARY BASE, CAPUTO SAID THERE WERE INDICATIONS
BUT NO HARD EVIDENCE OF A NICARAGUAN CONNECTION, AND ONLY

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INDIRECT INDICATIONS OF ANY LINK TO CUBA. END SUMMARY.

3. PARTICIPANTS: AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S. CANDIOTI AND STATE SECRETARY ALCONADA SEMPE ACCOMPANIED CAPUTO. JOINING THE VICE PRESIDENT WERE THE VICE PRESIDENT'S NATIONAL SECURITY ASSISTANT LORD AND STATE ARA/DAS SKOL.

4. THE VICE PRESIDENT BEGAN WITH A SUMMARY OF HIS IMPRESSIONS DURING HIS VISIT TO CARACAS FOR THE INAUGURATION OF CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ: THE MAIN THEMES OF CONVERSATION THERE WERE DEMOCRACY, DEBT, DRUGS AND HUMAN RIGHTS. HE WAS STRUCK BY THE IRONY OF THE ATTENDANCE OF FIDEL CASTRO AND DANIEL ORTEGA AT A CELEBRATION OF A DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION, AND APPRECIATED THE MENTION OF ROMULO BETANCOURT IN THE SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE VENEZUELAN CONGRESS -- A POINTED REFERENCE WHICH SURELY MADE CASTRO UNCOMFORTABLE. THE VICE PRESIDENT NOTED THAT PRESIDENT BUSH HAD JUST SIGNED A LETTER TO PRESIDENT ALFONSIN; IT MADE VERY CLEAR OUR CONTINUED, STRONG INTEREST IN SEEING ARGENTINA STAY DEMOCRATIC (TEXT SEPTEL).

5. THE FOREIGN MINISTER THANKED THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RECEIVING HIM, UNDERSCORING HIS AND ALFONSIN'S SERIOUS CONCERN ABOUT THE SITUATION IN ARGENTINA. HE NOTED THAT COINCIDENT WITH PRESIDENT ALFONSIN'S DECEMBER 2 WASHINGTON MEETING WITH THE THEN PRESIDENT- AND VICE-PRESIDENT-ELECT, THERE WAS A MILITARY UPRISING FROM THE ULTRA RIGHTS BACK HOME.

NOW, HE SAID, "THE OTHER CLAW OF THE PINNAC" -- THE EXTREME LEFT -- HAD APPEARED AT LA TABLADA. **ARGENTINA** THUS HAS TWO BASIC CHALLENGES: TO PREVENT THE RETURN OF ULTRA LEFT TERRORISM TO **ARGENTINA** AND AT THE SAME TIME TO PUT AN END TO ATTACKS FROM THE ULTRA RIGHT (CAPUTO THEN INSISTED THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER TO CALL THEM FOR WHAT THEY WERE: "**NAZIS**"). IN DIFFERENT WORDS CAPUTO STRESSED THAT THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO PUT DOWN THE LEFT, BUT THIS TIME WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF LAW AND EFFICIENT DEMOCRACY -- AS OPPOSED TO THE "DIRTY WAR" OF THE 70'S.

6. THE MAIN REASON THIS MEETING WAS REQUESTED, CAPUTO SAID, WAS TO STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUED USG SUPPORT FOR THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM AND THE RULE OF LAW. THE BEST WAY TO FIGHT TERRORISM IS THROUGH DEMOCRACY. THAT REPRESENTED A CRITICAL SIGNAL FOR ARGENTINE AND LATIN AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION. HE KNEW THE USG HAD SAID IT BEFORE, BUT IT WAS A MESSAGE WORTH REPEATING.

7. THE VICE PRESIDENT SAID THAT THERE COULD BE NO POSSIBLE QUESTION ABOUT OUR SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW -- AS CAPUTO WOULD SEE IN PRESIDENT BUSH'S LETTER, WHICH THE GOA COULD FEEL FREE TO MAKE PUBLIC. CAPUTO SUGGESTED THAT AN ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT BY THE VICE PRESIDENT WOULD ALSO HELP.

8. THE MINISTER TURNED TO LA TABLADA ITSELF. THERE WAS AS YET NO HARD EVIDENCE OF SUPPORT FOR THE ATTACKERS FROM ANY OTHER COUNTRY. THERE ARE INDICATIONS OF "CONTACTS" WITH FOREIGNERS, BUT NOT MUCH MORE; "WE THEREFORE HAVE TO BE CAUTIOUS." HE NOTED AS AN EXAMPLE THAT THE HEAD OF THE TERRORIST GROUP WAS THE MAN WHO HAD PLANNED THE MURDER OF SOMOZA IN PARAGUAY. THAT LED NATURALLY TO SUSPICIONS ABOUT NICARAGUAN COMPLICITY. NONETHELESS, HE DID NOT

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THINK THE NICARAGUAN GOVERNMENT "AS A COUNTRY" WAS INVOLVED IN THE ATTACK. "IT WOULD BE SUICIDAL FOR THE NICARAGUANS TO BE SEEN AS PLANNING AN ATTACK ON A COUNTRY HEADED BY SOMEONE LIKE ALFONSIN." HIS CONCLUSION: THERE WAS "CONTACT" BY THE ATTACKERS WITH NICARAGUA AND "SOME ELEMENTS IN THE NICARAGUAN GOVERNMENT KNEW ABOUT IT." AGAIN, HE STRESSED THAT THIS CONCLUSION WAS BASED ON "INDICATIONS, NOT EVIDENCE." HE NOTED THAT THERE WAS CONTINUING COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE USG AND THE GOA ON THE MATTER.

9. THE VICE PRESIDENT ASKED ABOUT THE CUBAN CONNECTION TO LA TABLADA. CAPUTO SAID THERE WAS LESS EVIDENCE, FEWER INDICATIONS THAN VIS-A-VIS NICARAGUA. THE ONLY LINK -- DEVELOPED FROM U.S. SOURCES -- SEEMED TO BE THE IDENTIFICATION OF SOME OF THE CAPTURED WEAPONS AS HAVING ONCE BEEN IN CUBA.

10. CAPUTO AGAIN THANKED THE VICE PRESIDENT, ENDING THE MEETING WITH THE ASSERTION THAT THERE CAN BE NO QUESTION THAT THE UNITED STATES FOR SOME TIME NOW HAS UNQUESTIONABLY BEEN "BETTING ON DEMOCRACY" IN LATIN AMERICA.

BAKER
END OF MESSAGE

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