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DIRECTORATE FOR PLANS

# Intelligence Information Cable

PRIORITY

IN 152768

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[Redacted]

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CITE

[Redacted]

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DIST 30 AUGUST 1970

COUNTRY: PANAMA

DOI:

[Redacted]

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SUBJECT: 1. RETURN TO PANAMA OF PANAMENISTA COUP PLOT LEADER "JOSEF".  
2. APPROACH BY PLOTTERS TO NATIONAL GUARD OFFICERS FOR SUPPORT IN COUP ATTEMPT

ACQ:

SOURCE:

[Redacted]

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1. ON 26 AUGUST "JOSEF", A LEADER OF THE PANAMENISTA

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ORGANIZATION PLOTTING THE OVERTHROW OF GENERAL OMAR TORRIJOS, THE DE FACTO HEAD OF PANAMA, ARRIVED BY AIR AT THE TOCUMEN AIRPORT NEAR PANAMA CITY ON A REGULARLY SCHEDULED FLIGHT. ( [Redacted] COMMENT: "JOSEF" IS BELIEVED TO BE PETER ERHARD MOSSACK, THE HEAD OF THE LUFTHANSA OFFICE IN PANAMA CITY. AFTER ASSISTING IN THE ESCAPE FROM CONFINEMENT OF FORMER NATIONAL GUARD (GN) COLONEL AMADO SANJUR IN JUNE, "JOSEF" TRAVELED TO THE UNITED STATES WHERE HE MET WITH SANJUR AND PANAMENISTA LEADERS TO DISCUSS A JOINT EFFORT TO OUST TORRIJOS AND RESTORE OUSTED PRESIDENT ARNULFO ARIAS TO THE PRESIDENCY.)

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2. IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIS ARRIVAL, "JOSEF" MET VICTOR SALAS, ANOTHER LEADER OF THE PANAMENISTA COUP ORGANIZATION. HE TOLD SALAS THAT HE ("JOSEF") WOULD CHECK WITH A SALVADORAN [Redacted]

[Redacted] WHO HAD RESIDED IN PANAMA FOR

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SOME TIME, AND AN UNNAMED INDIVIDUAL, WHO JOINTLY CONTROLLED APPROXIMATELY 600 MEN IN THE PANAMA CITY AREA AND NEAR THE TOWNS OF CHEPO AND PACORA NEAR THE TOCUMEN AIRPORT. ( [REDACTED] COMMENT: SALAS SUBSEQUENTLY COMMENTED THAT MOST OF THESE MEN WOULD BE USED TO ATTACK COLON OR TO BLOCK A MOVEMENT OF GN TROOPS FROM COLON ON THE DAY OF THE COUP. SALAS EXPLAINED THAT THIS WAS NECESSARY BECAUSE [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] THE COMMANDER OF THE SECOND MILITARY ZONE (COLON), HAD BEEN ASKED TO ASSIST THE COUP BUT HAD REFUSED AND STATED HE WOULD USE THE FORCES UNDER HIS COMMAND TO OPPOSE ANY COUP ATTEMPT.)

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3. [REDACTED] A PANAMENISTA WHO RECENTLY RETURNED FROM EXILE IN VENEZUELA, HAS RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS FROM FORMER

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CAPTAIN ABRAHAM C R O C A M O, A MILITANT  
SUPPORTER OF ARIAS AND A PARTICIPANT IN THE  
COUP PLOTTING, TO CONTACT [Redacted]

[Redacted] THE COMMANDER OF THE FIRST PUBLIC ORDER  
COMPANY STATIONED AT OLD PANAMA (OUTSIDE OF  
PANAMA CITY), AND ASK HIM TO SUPPORT THE COUP.

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[Redacted] CLAIMS TO HAVE 600 MEN  
UNDER HIS COMMAND WHO WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE  
COUP. ( [Redacted] COMMENT: THE NUMBERS OF SUPPORTERS  
CLAIMED BY THE COUP LEADERS APPEAR TO BE GREATLY  
EXAGGERATED.)

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4. [Redacted] THE COMMANDER OF  
THE FIRST MILITARY ZONE (PANAMA CITY), WAS  
CONTACTED BY COUP LEADERS ON 28 AUGUST AND  
AGREED TO SUPPORT THE COUP. [Redacted] OFFERED TO  
CONTACT OTHER OFFICERS IN THE GN AND ASK FOR

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THEIR COOPERATION FOR THE COUP.

5. VICTOR SALAS RECEIVED A LETTER FROM HIS BROTHER JACOBO S A L A S, A PANAMENISTA LEADER NOW IN THE UNITED STATES. THE LETTER, DATED 25 AUGUST, STATED THAT SOME UNNAMED LEADERS OF THE PANAMENISTA ORGANIZATION WHO WERE IN THE U.S. FAVORED ASKING THE U.S. TO PROVIDE MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR THE COUP. HOWEVER, SANJUR AND CROCAMO BELIEVE THAT THE NUMBER OF MEN THEY NOW HAVE IS SUFFICIENT TO INSURE THE SUCCESS OF THE COUP AND ARE READY TO LAUNCH THE COUP. JACOBO SALAS COMMENTED IN THE LETTER THAT HE BELIEVED THE OPERATION WOULD BE LAUNCHED IN A FEW DAYS AS SOON AS THE SUPPORT IN PANAMA WAS COORDINATED.

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