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REPORT CLASS ~~S E C R E T~~-~~WNINTEL-NOFORN~~ [Redacted]

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DIST: 10 OCTOBER 1983

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COUNTRY: EL SALVADOR

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SUBJECC: STATE OF ALERT OF MILITARY FORCES IN SAN VICENTE DEPARTMENT
DOI: 1 OCTOBER 1983

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TEXT: 1. ON 1 OCTOBER 1983, GOVERNMENT OF EL SALVADOR MILITARY FORCES IN SAN VICENTE DEPARTMENT INCREASED THEIR STATE OF ALERT AMID REPORTS OF POSSIBLE INSURGENT ATTACKS AGAINST KEY CITIES AND INSTALLATIONS WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT. IT IS BELIEVED THAT AN INSURGENT FORCE OF 1000 COMBATANTS IS CONCENTRATING IN SEVERAL CAMPS AT THE BASE OF THE CHINCHONTEPEC VOLCANO (1837N 8852W), 10 KILOMETERS SOUTH OF THE CITY OF SAN VICENTE. MILITARY COMMANDERS BELIEVE THAT THE INSURGENTS INTEND TO ATTACK SIMULTANEOUSLY AND CAPTURE THE CITIES OF SAN VICENTE (1338N 8847W) AND TECOLUCA (1333N 8847W) AND DESTROY THE CUSCATLAN BRIDGE (1336N 8834W) OVER THE RIO LEMPA. [] COMMENT: CAPTURING THE CITIES OF SAN VICENTE AND TECOLUCA WOULD ISOLATE A KEY SECTION OF NORTH-SOUTH HIGHWAY OVER WHICH MUCH OF THE DEPARTMENTS' COMMERCE TRAVELS. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CUSCATLAN BRIDGE WOULD INFLICT SERIOUS HARM TO A MAJOR EAST-WEST TRANSPORTATION ROUTE AS WELL AS RESULT IN A SEVERE PSYCHOLOGICAL BLOW TO THE ARMED FORCES. ANY MAJOR ATTACK IN SAN VICENTE DEPARTMENT WOULD BE A PROPAGANDA VICTORY FOR INSURGENT FORCES WHO ARE ATTEMPTING TO DISCREDIT THE GOVERNMENT'S NATIONAL CAMPAIGN.)

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1. IN AN ATTEMPT TO COUNTER AN ATTACK AGAINST THE TWO CITIES AND THE BRIDGE, MILITARY COMMANDERS HAVE POSITIONED TROOPS FROM THE TEHUACAN BATTALION AROUND THE PERIMETER OF SAN VICENTE, RELOCATED ARTILLERY BATTERIES AND MORTAR SQUADS IN SAN VICENTE TO COVER LIKELY AVENUES OF APPROACH AND STATIONED TWO COMPANIES OF INFANTRY FROM THE THIRD BRIGADE AT THE CUSCATLAN BRIDGE TO SECURE IT AND THE ADJACENT HYDROELECTRIC DAM. ADDITIONALLY, 1000 GOVERNMENT SOLDIERS, INCLUDING THE BELLOSO BATTALION, ARE LOCATED IN AMBUSH POSITIONS ALONG THE HIGHWAY FROM SAN VICENTE TO TECOLUCA. SECURITY IS ALSO BEING PROVIDED AT THE FERROCARRIL DE EL SALVADOR (FENADESAL) RAILROAD BRIDGE (1326N 8843W) BY 300 SOLDIERS FROM THE JIBOA BATTALION IN SAN VICENTE DEPARTMENT. [] COMMENT: THE MILITARY IS CONFIDENT THAT IT CAN REPEL AN ATTACK AGAINST SAN VICENTE OR TECOLUCA BUT IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE CUSCATLAN BRIDGE. 300 SOLDIERS ARE ALL THAT COMPRISE THE TWO INFANTRY COMPANIES SECURING THE BRIDGE AND DAM AND THIS WOULD NOT BE SUFFICIENT FORCE TO STOP A CONCERTED INSURGENT EFFORT TO DESTROY THE BRIDGE. THERE IS LITTLE CONCERN FOR THE HYDROELECTRIC DAM BECAUSE INSURGENTS WOULD REQUIRE TREMENDOUS AMOUNTS OF EXPLOSIVES TO DO EVEN MINOR DAMAGE. IN LIGHT OF THE INCREASED GOVERNMENT PREPAREDNESS, THE GUERRILLAS MAY HAVE TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED THEIR PLANNED ATTACKS.)

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3. [] COMMENT: []
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IN REALITY, RELATIVELY SMALL CHARGES OF EXPLOSIVES PLACED TO DESTROY THE GENERATOR TURBINES WOULD EFFECTIVELY TAKE THE PLANT OFF LINE FOR MANY MONTHS.)

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