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El Salvador
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FM FCC 171530Z FEBRUARY 82

TO IMMEDIATE CERTAIN POSTS AND DEPENDENT TERRITORIES
GUIDANCE TELEGRAM NUMBER 19 OF 17 FEBRUARY 1982

EL SALVADOR ELECTIONS

INTRODUCTION

1. MINISTERS HAVE DECIDED TO ACCEPT AN INVITATION FROM THE SALVADOREAN GOVERNMENT TO SEND 2 OFFICIAL OBSERVERS TO THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS ON 28 MARCH IN EL SALVADOR.
LINE TO TAKE
2. I) WE BELIEVE THAT THE SEARCH SHOULD CONTINUE FOR A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEMS OF EL SALVADOR.
II) MODERATE ELEMENTS IN EL SALVADOR ARE UNDER ENORMOUS PRESSURE FROM EXTREMISTS FROM THE LEFT AND RIGHT BUT DESERVE SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT.
III) THE SENDING OF OBSERVERS, WHICH IS CONDITIONAL ON OUR BEING SATISFIED AS TO THEIR SAFETY, IS AN INDICATION THAT WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO PRE-JUDGE THE CONDUCT OR OUTCOME, EVEN THOUGH WE HAVE DOUBTS ABOUT THE CONDITIONS IN WHICH THE ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD.
IV) THE UK HAS FEW HISTORICAL OR CURRENT LINKS WITH EL SALVADOR. LEGITIMATE PUBLIC CONCERN WHICH HAS LATELY BECOME OUTRAGE OVER EVENTS THERE REQUIRES THAT WE TRY TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE SITUATION FROM IMPARTIAL ENQUIRY.
V) IF WE DECLINE THE INVITATION TO SEND OBSERVERS. OPPONENTS OF THE ELECTIONS WILL CLAIM OUR DECISION AS A VINDICATION OF THEIR OPPOSITION. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE GUERRILLAS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT OF-VETO OVER THE ELECTORAL PROCESS.
VI) OUR OBSERVERS HAVE NOT YET BEEN CHOSEN. THEY WILL BE OF INDEPENDENT PUBLIC STANDING.
VII) OUR OBSERVERS (AND THE EL SALVADOR AND US GOVERNMENTS) WILL KNOW THAT THEY ARE EXPECTED TO REPORT AS THEY FIND, ON THE BASIS OF THEIR EXPERIENCE IN EL SALVADOR.

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VIII) THEIR REPORT WILL BE PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT AND MADE PUBLIC.

BACKGROUND (FOR USE WITH TRUSTED CONTACTS ONLY)
ELECTIONS

3. ALL POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE BEEN INVITED BY PRESIDENT DUARTE TO PARTICIPATE. HE HAS GUARANTEED THE SAFETY OF ALL CANDIDATES, THOUGH THERE ARE LEGITIMATE DOUBTS ABOUT HIS ABILITY TO SUBSTANTIATE THIS GUARANTEE. CAMPAIGNING IS BOUND TO BE RESTRICTED, DISRUPTION OF THE POLL ALL TOO LIKELY AND THE LARGE NUMBERS OF DISPLACED OR EXILED REFUGEES ARE UNLIKELY TO BE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE.

4. PARTIES TO THE LEFT OF DUARTE'S CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS HAVE REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE. THEY CLAIM THAT WHILE RIGHT WING DEATH SQUADS OPERATE UNHINDERED BY THE SECURITY FORCES, AND IN SOME CASES WITH THEIR COMPLICITY, OPEN CAMPAIGNING IS IMPOSSIBLE AND PRESIDENTIAL GUARANTEES OF SAFETY WORTHLESS. THEIR FEARS ARE LEGITIMATE.

5. THE GUERRILLAS HAVE RECENTLY STEPPED UP THEIR ACTIVITIES AGAINST GOVERNMENT FORCES. IMPORTANT ECONOMIC AND MILITARY TARGETS HAVE BEEN ATTACKED, WITH CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS. RIGHT WING CANDIDATES HAVE BEEN THREATENED AND ONE HAS BEEN ASSASSINATED.
THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT

6. PRESIDENT DUARTE IS A CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT WHO PROCLAIMS HIS BELIEF IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS AND SEEKS TO INTRODUCE REFORM. HE IS LEFT OF CENTRE, AND UNDER ATTACK FROM EXTREMES OF BOTH LEFT AND RIGHT. HE HEADS A 4-MAN JUNTA WHICH INCLUDES 2 OTHER CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND A SERVING GENERAL. HE APPEARS TO COMMAND SUPPORT FROM MODERATE ELEMENTS INCLUDING SOME MIDDLE RANKING MILITARY OFFICERS AND, THROUGH ELECTIONS, WHICH HE ADMITS WILL BE IMPERFECT, SEEKS TO LEGITIMISE HIS GOVERNMENT.
OPPOSITION

7. HE IS OPPOSED BY RIGHT WING DIEHARDS IN THE MILITARY WHO HAVE SUPPORT FROM THE PRIVILEGED ESTABLISHMENT, THOUGH MANY OF THESE HAVE LEFT THE COUNTRY. MORE SERIOUS IS THE OPEN INSURGENCY ON THE LEFT. FORMER DISPARATE TERRORIST GROUPS HAVE UNITED TO FORM THE FMLN (FARABUNDO MARTI LIBERATION FRONT) WHOSE MILITARY CAPABILITY

HAS GROWN SUBSTANTIALLY IN THE LAST YEAR AND A HALF. THE FMLN ARE IN ALLIANCE WITH THE FDR (DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTOINARY FRONT) WHOSE LEADERS ARE IN EXILE IN MEXOCO CITY. THEY INCLUDE A NUMBER OF RESPECTED CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC POLITICANS WHO HAVE ABANDONED DUARTE AND THROWN IN THEIR LOT WITH THE LEFT, BUT WHO CLAIM TO BE OF MODERATE SOCIALIST PERSUASION. THE FDR IS LED BY DUARTE'S 1972 RUNNING MATE FOR THE PRESIDENCY, GUILLERMO UNGO.

NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE GUERRILLAS AND GOVERNMENT

8. THE FMLN/FDR ALLIANCE PUT FORWARD IN OCTOBER 1981 PROPOSALS FOR NEGOTIATIONS WHICH HAVE SINCE BEEN REPEATED. THESE WERE REJECTED BY DUARTE WHO CLAIMED THEY WERE TANTAMOUNT TO DISMEMBERMENT OF THE ARMED FORCES. DUARTE HIMSELF HAS ALSO PROPOSED NEGOTIATIONS ON THE CONDITION THAT THE OPPOSITION PARTIES TAKE PART IN ELECTIONS. THE GUERRILLAS, REJECTING THIS, HAVE CONTINUED TO URGE NEGOTIATIONS BEFORE ELECTIONS. THERE HAVE BEEN RECENT PRESS REPORTS OF A LETTER TO PRESIDENT REAGAN FROM GUERRILLA COMMANDERS OFFERING TALKS WITHOUT PRE-CONDITIONS. WE HAVE SO FAR BEEN UNABLE TO OBTAIN DETAILS OF THEIR NEW PROPOSALS. SECRETARY HAIG HAS DESCRIBED THEM AS QUOTE DRIPPING WITH PROPAGANDA UNQUOTE.

SALVADOREAN CHURCH

9. THE SALVADOREAN BISHOPS IN JANUARY 1981 ISSUED A STATEMENT DESCRIBING THE ELECTIONS AS QUOTE A FAINT GLIMMER OF HOPE, A POSSIBLE BEGINNING OF A SOLUTION TO THE PRESENT CRISIS UNQUOTE. THEY REMINDED CATHOLICS OF THEIR QUOTE OBLIGATION OF CONSCIENCE TO VOTE UNQUOTE AND REGRETTED OPPOSITION TO THE ELECTIONS.

OAS

10. AT A MEETING OF THE OAS IN ST LUCIA IN DECEMBER 1981, THE DUARTE PROPOSAL TO HOLD ELECTIONS WAS OVERWHELMINGLY ENDORSED (22 VOTES TO 3). ONLY NICARAGUA, MEXICO AND GREMADA VOTED AGAINST. A NUMBER OF OAS MEMBER COUNTRIES ARE SENDING OBSERVERS.
LATIN AMERICA

11. THE GOVERNMENT OF EL SALVADOR ENJOYS SUPPORT FROM COSTA RICA, HONDURAS AND OTHER CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES WITH THE EXCEPTION OF NICARAGUA AND HAS WITH HONDURAS AND COSTA RICA RECENTLY BEEN

INCLUDED IN A NEW CENTRAL AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC COMMUNITY. MEXICO IS HOSTILE, COLOMBIA AND VENEZUELA HAVE EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR THE ELECTIONS. OTHER LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES, NOTABLY ARGENTINA, SUPPORT THE SALVADOREAN GOVERNMENT BUT SOME DO SO ONLY DISCREETLY. NOT ALL WILL BE SENDING OFFICIAL OBSERVERS TO THE ELECTIONS.

US

12. THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION HAS CONCLUDED THAT DUARTE OFFERS THE BEST CHANCE OF BUILDING UP IN EL SALVADOR A MODERATE, DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT OF THE CENTRE. THEY HAVE RECOGNISED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS BY THE ARMY AND THE EXTREME RIGHT BUT ARE UNDER CONSIDERABLE CONGRESSIONAL PRESSURE TO WITHHOLD FURTHER ASSISTANCE IN THE FACE OF DUARTE'S CONTINUING INABILITY TO CONTROL THE SECURITY FORCES AND PREVENT FURTHER ATROCITIES. THE UNITED STATES IN 1981 GAVE AID WORTH DOLLARS 140 MILLION OF WHICH DOLLAR 36 MILLION WAS OF MILITARY AID. A FURTHER DOLLAR 55 MILLION MILITARY AID HAS JUST BEEN ALLOCATED. THE US BELIEVES THAT THE GUERRILLAS ARE SUSTAINED, SUPPLIED AND ACTIVELY ASSISTED BY CUBA WITH NICARAGUAN SUPPORT AND COMPLICITY. THE OUTCOME OF THE PRESENT CONFLICT IN EL SALVADOR IS SEEN IN WASHINGTON AS BEING OF CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE TO THE STABILITY AND SECURITY OF THE REGION AS A WHOLE.

EC

13. FRANCE, THE NETHERLANDS AND IRELAND HAVE NOT BEEN INVITED TO SEND OBSERVERS. GREECE AND DENMARK HAVE DECLINED INVITATIONS. FRG, BELGIUM, LUXEMBOURG AND ITALY HAVE STILL TO DECIDE. ALL ARE UNDER GROWING PRESSURE FROM PUBLIC INDIGNATION AT EVENTS IN EL SALVADOR AND ARE LOSING SYMPATHY WITH THE CONTINUED INABILITY OF DUARTE TO PREVENT FURTHER ATROCITIES.

14. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION SEE PARLIAMENTARY 1981 FCO BRIEF: BACKGROUND TO THE TROUBLES IN EL SALVADOR.

15. PLEASE REPORT SIGNIFICANT LOCAL REACTION TO OUR DECISION ON OBSERVERS.

CARRINGTON

BY TELEGRAPH:

ATHENS	MOSCOW	LIMA	TEL AVIV
BONN	NEW YORK (UEMIS)	MONTEVIDEO	CAIRO
BRUSSELS	NEW YORK (BIS)	SANTIAGO	MANILA
BRUSSELS (UKREP, EEC)	WASHINGTON	ASUNCION	TOKYO
COPENHAGEN	BUENOS AIRES	GUATEMALA	OTTAWA
THE HAGUE	CARACAS	LA PAZ	KINGSTON
LUXEMBOURG	MEXICO CITY	PANAMA	PORT OF SPAIN
PARIS	BRASILIA	QUITO	GEORGETOWN
ROME	RIO DE JANEIRO	SAN JOSE	BRIDGETOWN
GENEVA (UEMIS)	BOGOTA	SANTO DOMINGO	NASSAU
DUBLIN	HAVANA	TEGUCIGALPA	BEHMOPAN

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AND SAVING TO CERTAIN OTHER POSTS

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