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TO FCO IMMEDIATE (DESKBY 0700Z 9 NOVEMBER)

TELEGRAM NUMBER 454 OF 8 NOVEMBER 1984

INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON MOSCOW UKDEL NATO MODUK

PRIORITY TEGUCIGALPA HAVANA MEXICO CITY

MIGS FOR NICARAGUA

1. ACCORDING TO NICARAGUAN PRESS, A SOVIET FREIGHTER WAS SHADOWED INTO NICARAGUAN TERRITORIAL WATERS BY 2 US NAVY FRIGATES AT ABOUT 1045 ON 7 NOVEMBER. AN MFA PROTEST NOTE SENT TO US GOVERNMENT LATER IN DAY CLAIMED THAT THE FRIGATES ENTERED TO WITHIN 7 MILES OF COAST BEFORE BEING APPROACHED BY A NICARAGUAN COAST GUARD VELETTE AND WITHDRAWING. (NICARAGUA CLAIMS 12 MILES TERRITORIAL WATERS).
2. NOTE ALLEGES THAT AT ABOUT SAME TIME A C-130 AIRCRAFT WITHOUT VISIBLE MARKINGS "OVERFLEW THIS SECTOR 5 MILES FROM NICARAGUAN COAST IN A NORTH-SOUTH DIRECTION". AIR DEFENCE BATTERIES FIRED AT OFFENDING PLANE WHICH LEFT AREA.
3. WE UNDERSTAND SOVIET VESSEL IS BAKURIANI OF BLACK SEA SHIPPING COMPANY. TIGHT SECURITY HAS BEEN MAINTAINED IN CORINTO WHERE VESSEL WAS STILL UNLOADING AT 8 AM. AT 8.30 ANOTHER SONIC BOOM WAS HEARD OVER NICARAGUA WHICH SANDINISTAS CLAIM WAS AGAIN FROM AN SR-71.
4. THE MFA ARRANGED FOR A LARGE GROUP OF JOURNALISTS TO OBSERVE THE US FRIGATES FROM AN AN-26 AIRCRAFT. US EMBASSY WAS GIVEN MINIMAL WARNING.
5. THE SANDINISTAS HAVE BEEN PRESENTING THE RUMOURS OF MIG DELIVERIES AS PART OF A STRATEGY TO PREPARE WAY FOR DIRECT MILITARY ACTION AGAINST NICARAGUA AS WELL AS TO HELP DISCREDIT THE ELECTIONS.



ACTION AGAINST NICARAGUA AS WELL AS TO HELP DISCREDIT THE ELECTIONS.

6. ASSESSMENT. I THINK IT UNLIKELY THAT THE COMANDANTES, WHO ARE GENUINELY QUITE NERVOUS ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF STRONG US ACTION IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE US ELECTIONS ARE IN A MOOD TO TAKE ACTIONS NOW WHICH INVOLVE A HIGH DEGREE OF RISK (A MORE LOGICAL TIME TO DO THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER). IT ALSO SEEM UNLIKELY THAT THE SOVIET LEADERS WOULD WANT TO FACE THE CONSEQUENCES OF DELIVERING MIGS AT THIS TIME. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE FREIGHTER'S VOYAGE (INCLUDING FACT THAT ACCORDING TO US EMBASSY HERE IT TRANSITED NEITHER SUEZ NOR PANAMA CANALS), IT MAY WELL BE THAT OTHER FORMS OF SENSITIVE MILITARY EQUIPMENT WERE CARRIED.

7. THE ATMOSPHERE IN NICARAGUA IS DISTINCTLY LESS TENSE THAN POST-GRENADA. BUT IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT POLICE LEAVE HAS BEEN CANCELLED AND THAT THE ARMY IS ON ALERT.

SUMMERSCALE

FCO PLEASE PASS ALL

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FIG. 208 1/1

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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

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