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FM OTTAWA 162210Z FEB 82

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 98 OF 16 FEBRUARY

SAVING TO SAN JOSE, TEGUCIGALPA

YOUR TELNO 53: EL SALVADOR ELECTIONS

1. MEMBER OF CHANCERY TRIED THIS MORNING TO PROBE THE CANADIANS ABOUT THEIR THINKING ON SENDING OBSERVERS.

2. THE CANADIANS ORIGINALLY THOUGHT THAT THERE WERE TO BE STRUCTURED ARRANGEMENTS FOR OBSERVERS (AS WITH ZIMBABWE) BUT THE EL SALVADORIAN GOVERNMENT HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT THIS IS NOT THE CASE. THE CANADIANS NOW REALISE WITH ANXIETY THAT THEY MUST MAKE AN INDEPENDENT DECISION TO SEND OBSERVERS AND THIS WOULD BE INTERPRETED AS ENDORSING THE ELECTION PROCESS.

3. THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT IS UNDER STRONG PRESSURE BOTH FROM THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND FROM PARLIAMENTARIANS NOT TO SEND OBSERVERS. DEA LAST WEEK RECEIVED ABOUT 1,000 LETTERS ASKING THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT NOT TO SUPPORT THE ELECTIONS; THIS IS REMARKABLE FROM A PUBLIC NORMALLY APATHETIC ABOUT FOREIGN AFFAIRS. THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT IS ALSO HAVING TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF A REPORT ON CANADA'S RELATIONS WITH LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN PUBLISHED LAST DECEMBER BY A HOUSE OF COMMONS SUBCOMMITTEE WHICH EXPRESSED "THE GRAVEST DOUBTS" ABOUT THE HOLDING OF ELECTIONS. MOREOVER, THREE MPS CAME BACK AT THE END OF A VISIT LAST MONTH TO SALVADORIAN REFUGEE CAMPS IN HONDURAS CONVINCED THAT CANADA'S POLICY OF SUPPORTING ELECTIONS WAS WRONG.

4. ANOTHER FACTOR IN CANADIAN THINKING IS RELUCTANCE TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE US LINE, WHICH THEY PERCEIVE AS AGGRESSIVE AND AS EXACERBATING THE SITUATION.

5. ACCORDING TO DEA, THE MATTER IS STILL UNDER CONSIDERATION. THE DESK OFFICER DREW ATTENTION TO A RADIO INTERVIEW IN 4 FEBRUARY IN WHICH MR MACGUIGAN SAID: "WE'RE CERTAINLY NOT PLANNING ANY DECISION ON THAT (IE. THE SENDING OF OBSERVERS); WE'LL WAIT TO SEE HOW THE CAMPAIGN DEVELOPS AND HOW PARTIES ARE ALLOWED TO BEHAVE AND DO BEHAVE IN THE CAMPAIGN". THE DECISION IS LIKELY TO BE MADE AT THE LAST MOMENT WHEN CANADA HAS SEEN THE REACTION OF THE OTHER COUNTRIES.

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6. ONE OPTION UNDER SERIOUS CONSIDERATION IS MERELY TO SEND A POLITICAL OFFICER FROM THE EMBASSY IN COSTA RICA TO COVER THE ELECTIONS. THIS WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH THEIR NORMAL METHODS OF COVERING AN ELECTION IN A COUNTRY WHERE THEY HAVE NO EMBASSY BUT HARDLY QUALIFIES AS "OBSERVING".

BRASNETT

STANDARD

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