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GRS 390

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DESKBY 150800Z

FH MEXICO CITY 142240Z JUN 83

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 554 OF 14 JUN

INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON

MIPT: STONE'S TOUR OF CENTRAL AMERICA: EL SALVADOR

1. PRESEL SAID THAT STONE HAD ATTENDED A MEETING OF THE SALVADOREAN PEACE COUNCIL. PRESIDENT MAGANA HAD PRESIDED.
2. AT THIS MEETING IT HAD BEEN UNANIMOUSLY AGREED TO AUTHORISE STONE TO ENTER WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS INTO DISCUSSION WITH THE SALVADOREAN GUERRILLA ORGANISATIONS. THE GUERRILLAS HAD LEFT MESSAGES IN VARIOUS CAPITALS, INCLUDING MANAGUA AND MEXICO TO THE EFFECT THAT THEY WISHED TO SPEAK TO STONE. I ASKED WHETHER HE HAD GIVEN ANY ANSWER. THE FACT THAT THE GUERRILLAS HAD PUBLICISED THEIR REQUEST SEEMED MOST UNPROMISING. PRESEL REPLIED THAT THOSE WHO HAD RECEIVED THE MESSAGES FOR STONE HAD SAID THAT STONE WOULD HAVE TO CONSIDER THE POSITION ON HIS RETURN TO WASHINGTON. STONE HAD THEREFORE SEEN NO ONE FROM THE FDR ALTHOUGH HE WAS AWARE OF UNGO'S PRESENCE IN MEXICO.
3. PRESEL SAID THAT THE US GOVERNMENT NOW HAD A DIFFICULT DECISION TO TAKE. SOME WOULD ARGUE AGAINST ANY DEALINGS WITH THE GUERRILLAS AT ALL, THE MORE SO IN THE PRESENT MOOD IN WASHINGTON. OTHERS WOULD SAY THAT THIS WAS A CHANCE NOT TO BE MISSED BEFORE US INVOLVEMENT IN EL SALVADOR BECAME ANY DEEPER. IN HIS OWN VIEW A PRECONDITION OF ANY SUCH TALKS WOULD BE COMPLETE SECRECY. IF THE GUERRILLAS WERE TO REVEAL THAT THEY WERE TAKING PLACE OR WHAT WAS UNDER DISCUSSION AT THEM, THEN THE US GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE TO BREAK OFF AND REPUDIATE THEM. THERE WOULD OF COURSE BE ENORMOUS PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES OVER WHEN, HOW AND WHERE TALKS SHOULD TAKE PLACE. MOREOVER THE GUERRILLAS' IDEA OF AN AGENDA WOULD BE VERY DIFFERENT FROM THE AMERICANS'. NEVERTHELESS WITH THE GREEN LIGHT FROM THE SALVADOREAN GOVERNMENT, THE US GOVERNMENT WAS IN A NEW SITUATION, AND WOULD HAVE TO THINK ITS POLICY THROUGH AGAIN.

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4. I ASKED HOW WIDELY THIS NEWS WAS KNOWN. HE REPLIED THAT ON THE US SIDE IT WAS CONFINED TO STONE, HIS PRESENT TEAM, SHULTZ AND A RESTRICTED NUMBER IN WASHINGTON. SO FAR AS HE KNEW IT HAD GONE NO FURTHER.

5. PRESEL WENT ON TO SPEAK OF THE HOPELESSNESS OF THE SALVADOREAN ARMY. HOWEVER GOOD THE ADVICE IT MIGHT RECEIVE FROM THE UNITED STATES, IT SEEMED INCAPABLE OF TAKING THE AGGRESSIVE MILITARY ACTIONS WHICH WERE NECESSARY TO COPE WITH THE INSURRECTION. HE THOUGHT THAT THE OUTGOING US AMBASSADOR IN EL SALVADOR DESERVED WELL OF HIS COUNTRY. HE HAD DONE AN EXCELLENT JOB IN TELLING WASHINGTON THE SOMETIMES UNPALATABLE TRUTH ABOUT EL SALVADOR.

6. PLEASE REPEAT AS NECESSARY AND SEE MIFT.

TICKELL

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