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TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 27 OF 4 JANUARY

INFO ROUTINE TEGUCIGALPA, SAN JOSE, MEXICO CITY.

TEGUCIGALPA TELNO 1 TO FCO: EL SALVADOR

1. THE AMERICANS REGARD THE SUCCESSFUL ATTACK ON THE INFANTRY BRIGADE HQ AT EL PARAISO AS AMONG THE WORST REVERSES SUFFERED BY THE SALVADOREAN FORCES IN THE ENTIRE WAR. THE SALVADORAN GOVERNMENT IS REPORTED TO HAVE CONFIRMED THAT THEY LOST MORE THAN 100 SOLDIERS, THEIR HIGHEST CASUALTY TOLL IN A SINGLE BATTLE. WE UNDERSTAND THAT AN INTER-AGENCY REVIEW OF THE SALVADORAN MILITARY SITUATION WILL PROBABLY RESULT IN THE ADMINISTRATION SHORTLY ASKING CONGRESS FOR AS MUCH AS DLRS 100 MILLION IN ADDITIONAL MILITARY AID FOR EL SALVADOR. THE INTENTION WOULD BE TO EXPAND THE SALVADORAN ARMED FORCES BY ABOUT 20 PERCENT (IE 5-6000 TROOPS) AND TO PROVIDE EXTRA HELICOPTERS. CONGRESSMAN LONG, CHAIRMAN OF THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE (WHICH LAST YEAR REDUCED BY HALF THE ADMINISTRATION'S REQUEST FOR DLRS 110 MILLION IN SUPPLEMENTARY AID FOR EL SALVADOR, LEAVING AN ADDITIONAL DLRS 15 MILLION DEPENDENT ON LAND REFORM PROGRESS AND ON BRINGING TO TRIAL THE KILLERS OF THE NUNS), HAS SAID THAT FURTHER CONDITIONS WOULD BE APPLIED TO ANY NEW MILITARY AID REQUESTS. HE ADDED THAT, "THERE'S GOT TO BE A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN THE WHOLE SALVADORAN SYSTEM OF JUSTICE. THEY'VE HAD 30,000 KILLINGS AND NOT ONE CONVICTION." CONGRESSMAN BARNES, THE DEMOCRATIC CHAIRMAN OF THE HOUSE WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS SUB-COMMITTEE, HAS ALSO SAID THAT HE WILL OPPOSE MORE MILITARY AID FOR EL SALVADOR. BARNES'S OFFICE, HOWEVER, HAVE TOLD US THAT SOME AT LEAST OF THE FUNDS REQUESTED BY THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD PROBABLY BE AUTHORISED AT THE END OF THE DAY, ALBEIT WITH NEW CONDITIONS.

2. THERE IS LESS CONCERN HERE ABOUT THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CUSCATLAN BRIDGE, GIVEN THAT TRAFFIC IS ABLE TO PASS OVER A DAM 600 METRES UP RIVER AND THAT LOCAL ENGINEERS ARE EXPECTED TO CONSTRUCT A BAILEY BRIDGE IN A FORTNIGHT OR SO.

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3. IT HAS BEEN REPORTED THAT MAJOR JOSE RICARDO POZO AND LT COL ARISTIDES ALFONSO MARQUEZ WILL BE RECEIVING OVERSEAS ASSIGNMENTS BECAUSE OF THEIR ALLEGED DEATH SQUAD ACTIVITIES. THIS IS REGARDED BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT AS A USEFUL PARTIAL RESPONSE TO VICE-PRESIDENT BUSH'S STRICTURES DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO EL SALVADOR (OUR TELNO 3739 OF 16 DECEMBER).

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