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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

11 July, 1984

Dear Charles,

El Salvador: President Duarte

You will be aware that President Duarte took up office on 1 June following his victory in the elections to which the United Kingdom sent official observers. His election offers the best hope yet for the consolidation of democracy in El Salvador, the ending of the 6-year insurgent war and economic stabilisation. While it is too early to judge his performance, and while the difficulties facing him are great, the Secretary of State considers we should give encouragement to these aims without delay.

A political gesture of support for his efforts would be appropriate. He faces enormous difficulties and needs international support. The US Government take the line that "an hour of visible support now would be worth a week's visit next year". The chance to make such a gesture may be offered by a visit he is making to Bonn from 16-18 July, and to Rome on 19 July. We understand that he does not wish to absent himself from El Salvador for very long at this time but would undoubtedly welcome the opportunity to see the Prime Minister. It would seem advantageous to invite him to make a stop-over in London on 19 or 20 July for a meeting with the Prime Minister if her timetable allowed. We hope to arrange a longer visit in due course, perhaps next year. The Americans would warmly welcome such an invitation and it would be consistent with the concern we share with the FRG and Italy for the situation in El Salvador. Since Duarte's election was generally regarded as fair and he is committed to a policy of national reconciliation and respect for human rights, he has had some success in restoring international respectability to El Salvador. A visit should not therefore provoke strong domestic criticism.

You will recall the positive meeting the Prime Minister had with Sr Duarte, then out of office, in July last year. I should be grateful if consideration could be given to a meeting with the Prime Minister on 19 or 20 July.

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Yours ever,
L V Appleyard
(L V Appleyard)
Private Secretary