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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

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MEMORANDUM

EL SALVADOR: The Role of Roberto D'Aubuisson

Former Army Major Roberto D'Aubuisson has been an articulate and charismatic spokesman for the far right in El Salvador since leaving active service after the reformist coup on 15 October 1979. A protege of "Chele" Medrano, the ultra-rightist former chief of the National Guard, D'Aubuisson has served as principal henchman for wealthy landowners and as a coordinator of the right-wing death squads that have murdered several thousand suspected leftists and leftist sympathizers during the past year.

While relatively intelligent, D'Aubuisson is egocentric, reckless, and perhaps mentally unstable. The philosophy he publicly espouses calls for the physical elimination of El Salvador's leftist opposition, which he defines as anyone not supportive of the traditional status quo. His hatred of those he suspects of harboring leftist sympathies motivated his visits to the US last spring, during which he condemned the Carter administration's policy toward El Salvador. After his US visa was cancelled, D'Aubuisson traveled throughout Latin America seeking military and political support for his Broad National Front--an ultra-conservative group of wealthy Salvadorans.

*This memorandum was requested by the National Security Adviser to the President. It was prepared by*

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D'Aubuisson is funded by members of the extreme right-wing Salvadoran elite, most of whom now live in Guatemala and the US. Though small in number, these wealthy expatriates have reportedly spent millions of dollars to support D'Aubuisson and his few followers in their effort to overthrow the present junta and return the country to right-wing military rule. [REDACTED]

D'Aubuisson's personal following is limited to a handful of wealthy civilians and some extreme rightist military officers, many of whom are not on active duty. His influence in the military has waned over the past year, as many of his former colleagues in the junior officer corps have looked to more senior officers for leadership. [REDACTED]

Nevertheless, D'Aubuisson could play a spoiler role by continuing to encourage right-wing terrorists--many of whom are enlisted personnel in the security forces--and by issuing inflammatory public declarations against the junta and those sympathetic to the reform process. D'Aubuisson's penchant for action is underscored by his sponsorship of two unsuccessful coups during the past year. His efforts to turn back the clock on reforms and initiate an all-out civil war against the left could succeed if he manages to convince a majority of the officer corps--most of whom have rightist sympathies--that the new US administration would accept an ouster of the Christian Democrats from the government. [REDACTED]

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SUBJECT: El Salvador: The Role of Roberto D'Aubuisson

