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DEPARTMENT OF STATE TELEGRAM

541 Mfg. 11-70 25X1

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PER #

TOTAL COPIES: 19

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ACTION ARA-11
INFO OCT-01 SS-20 IO-04 L-02 NSC-10 NSCE-00 INR-07 CIAE-00
NSAE-00 PM-03 DODE-00 MC-02 RSR-01 ACDA-10 RSC-01
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R 221454Z FEB 71
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1460
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
USCINCSO

~~SECRET~~ SECTION 1 OF 2 CARACAS 844

LIMDIS

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

SUBJECT: COLOMBIAN-VENEZUELAN BORDER DISPUTE

REF: BOGOTA 984, 985

1. THIS EMBASSY SHRES CONCERN EXPRESSED REFTELS OVER APPARENT
DETERIORATION OF SITUATION ARISING OUT OF CURRENT BORDER DISPUTE
BETWEEN COLOMBIA AND VENEZUELA.

2. COLOMBIAN AMBASSADOR CH RRY SAMPER IS UNDOUBTEDLY AN ACTIVIST
AND REPORT OF HIS APPROACH TO EMBASSY BOGOTA (BOGOTA 985)
IS CONSISTENT WITH HIS PREVIOUS RECORD OF APPROCHES TO THIS
EMBASSY (CARACAS 500) AND HIS DISCUSSION WITH UK AMBASSADOR
(CARACAS 684). IT APPEARS QUITE CLEAR THAT HE SEES US
INVOLVEMENT AS PRIME TACTICAL OBJECTIVE IN PRESENT SITUATION.

3. REFERENCES BY COLOMBIANS IN BOGOTA 984 TO WEAKNESS OF CALDERA
GOVERNMENT AND ITS SUSCEPTIBILITY TO MILITARY COUP SEEM TO
US OVERDRAWN.

4. AMBASSADOR JOVA LUNCHEDED ON FEBRUARY 19 WITH FONMIN CALVANI
AND INTERNATIONAL POLICY DIRECTOR PEREZ CHIRIBOGA. CONVERSATION

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INEVITABLY TURNED TO COLOMBIAN-VENEZUELAN RELATIONS, WITH CALVANI STRESSING THAT VENEZUELA H D ONLY PEACEFUL INTENTIONS. HE EMPHASIZED THAT VENEZUELAN ARMY MOVEMENTS REPORTED FROM THE FRONTIER AREA WERE PURELY DEFENSIVE AND PRECAUTIONARY AND IN NO WAY AIMED AGGRESSIVELY AT COLOMBIA. MOREOVER, HE WENT ON, REPORTS OF VENEZUELAN ARMY MOVEMENTS COULD EASILY BE BALANCED BY SIMILAR REPORTS FROM COLOMBIAN SIDE OF FRONTIER. CALVANI THEN PRODUCED REPORT FROM VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR IN BOGOTA DESCRIBING CONDITIONS IN RICHACH AREA AND PURPORTING TO GIVE EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNTS OF TRUCK CONVOYS, CONCENTRATIONS OF SEVERAL THOUSAND UNIFORMED MEN IN VARIOUS LOCALITIES, CONSTRUCTION OF SMALL AIRFIELDS, SIGHTING OF ARMY VEHICLES PARKED BEHIND REMOTE FARM HOUSE, ALLEGATIONS OF SEEING DISMANTLED TANKS AND CANNON OF TWO-INCH BORE BEING TRANSPORTED, AND FACT THAT SUPPOSEDZY INDIAN TRIBES IN BORDER AREAS ARE ARMED WITH M-1 RIFLES AND, WHILE NOT UNDER ARMY DISCIPLINE, ARE TRAINED JUNGLE FIGHTERS. SAME REPORT ALSO DEALT WITH ACTIVITIES OF ONE JACQUES NOEL, PURPORTEDZY A FRENCH DEFENSE ATTACHE, PROMOTING SALE OF ARMS TO COLOMBIAN FORCES.

5. CALVANI POINTED UP ROLE OF PRESS IN ADDING UNNECESSARILY TO PRESENT TENSION. CAPRILES NEWSPAPER CHAIN HAD DRUMMED UP JINGOISTIC FEELINGS IN VENEZUELA, BUT THIS CERTAINLY WAS NO REFLECTION OF GOV POSITION. MANY ARTICLES IN ALL SECTORS OF COLOMBIAN PRESS, INCLUDING THOSE CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH PERSONALITIES HIGH IN GOC, WERE OF SIMILAR VEIN. CALVANI SAID HE COULD ALSO POINT TO VARIOUS PRESS CONFERENCES AND OTHER STATEMENTS MADE BY COLOMBIAN FOREIGN MINISTER AND OTHER HIGH OFFICIALS TH T CONTRIBUTED LITTLE TO CALMING OF SPIRITS ON OTHER SIDE OF BORDER.

6. WITH REGARD TO ARMS ACQUISITION, CALVANI ARGUED THAT PRESENT EQUIPMENT OF VENEZUELAN ARMED FORCES TENDED TO BE A MISH-ASH OF UNSYNCHRONIZED ITEMS. WHEN PRESIDENT CALVANI HAD ASKED PRESIDENT NIXON FOR ASSISTANCE IN MODERNIZATION OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT, IT WAS NOT WITH ANY ANTI-COLOMBIAN DESIGN IN MIND, BUT ONLY REFLECTED NATURAL DESIRE OF ANY SOVEREIGN STATE TO KEEP UP TO DATE ITS DEFENSE SYSTEM. TO DO OTHERWISE WOULD OPEN ANY GOVERNMENT TO CH RGES OF IRRESPONSIBILITY. SINCE THEN, HOWEVER, ARMS PICTURE HAD CHANGED COMPLETELY WITH COLOMBIAN MOVE TO ACQUIRE FRENCH-MADE MIRAGE AIRCRAFT. THIS HAD ALARMED VENEZUELAN MILITARY AND CORRESPONDINGLY INCREASED

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 PRESSURES ON GOV.

7. WITH REGARD TO BASIS FOR PRESENT DISPUTE, CALVANI APPEARED TO AGREE WITH POSITION TAKEN BY COLOMBIANS PREVIOUS DAY WITH JOVA IN BOGOTA. HE ADMITTED THAT, WHILE COLOMBIANS INDOCUMENTADOS AND OTHER ELEMENTS MIGHT BE AGGRAVATING CIRCUMSTANCES, HARD CORE OF PROBLEM LAY IN DEFINITION OF RESPECTIVE BOUNDARIES IN GULF OF VENEZUELA.

8. DRAWING A MAP TO ILLUSTRATE POINTS AT ISSUE, CALVANI EMPHASIZED THAT VENEZUELAN POSITION HAD IN NO WAY CHANGED FROM THAT EXPOUNDED BY PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT LEONI. GOV HAD ALWAYS MAINTAINED THAT LINE DRAWN ON PARALLEL FROM CASTILLETAS POINT MARKED LIMIT BELOW WHICH GOV WOULD NOT EVEN DISCUSS MATTERS, CONSIDERING THIS TO INCLUDE PURELY VENEZUELAN WATER. IN CONTRAST, LINE EXTENDING LAND BOUNDARY OUT INTO SEA, WHILE CONSIDERED "NORMAL AND CORRECT", WAS SUBJECT TO NEGOTIATION. CALVANI SAID HE WAS ENCOURAGED BY FACT COLOMBIANS HAD SHOWN SOME FLEXIBILITY IN ACKNOWLEDGING RIGHT TO TERRITORIAL WATERS FOR ISLAS LOS MONJES AND THAT THIS WAS FAVORABLE DEVELOPMENT. GOV SIMILARLY WOULD BE PREPARED IN NEGOTIATION TO HAV AN OPEN MIND AND TO DISCUSS SOME ALTERATIONS IN AREA SURROUNDING WHAT IT CONSIDERED TO BE LOGICAL EXTENSION OF COMMON FRONTIER INTO SEA. RETURNING TO CASTILLETAS PARALLEL, HOWEVER, CALVANI SAID AGAIN THAT AREA SOUTH OF THAT COULD NOT EVEN BE DISCUSSED AS IT WAS NOT ONLY VENEZUELAN TERRITORY BUT WAS OF CRITICAL STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE TO VENEZUELA, COVERING AS IT DOES THE ENTRANCE TO LAKE MARACAIBO.

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ACTION ARA-11

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NSAE-00 PM-03 DODE-00 MC-02 RSR-01 ACDA-10 RSC-01
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R 221454Z FEB 71
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1461
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
USCINCSO

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 CARACAS 844

LIMDIS

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

SUBJECT: COLOMBIAN-VENEZUELAN BORDER DISPUTE

EF: BOGOTA 984, 985

9. IN REPLY TO QUESTION BY AMBASSADOR JOVA, CALVANI AFFIRMED THAT VENEZUELAN PUBLIC OPINION WOULD RESIST TALKING MATTER TO ARBITRATION OR TO AN INTERNATIONAL BODY IN VIEW OF VENEZUELA'S UNFORTUNATE PAST EXPERIENCES. IN ANY CASE, HE SAID, DIRECT BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS WERE IN PROCESS AND SHOULD BE CONTINUED IN EFFORT WORK OUT MUTUALLY AGREEABLE SOLUTION. GOOD OFFICES, MEDIATION, AND ARBITRATION SHOULD BE KEPT AS LAST RESORTS IF AND WHEN BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS MIGHT FAIL. MEANWHILE, HE THOUGHT IT WISE TO INVOLVE NEITHER FOREIGN MINISTERS NOR PRESIDENTS DIRECTLY IN THIS MATTER LEST THIS SERVE ONLY TO UNDERCUT ROLE OF NEGOTIATORS. CALVANI SAID THAT HE HOPED TO HAVE A FURTHER CONVERSATION ON THE SUBJECT WITH AMBASSADOR MCCLINTOCK AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY UPON AMBASSADOR'S RETURN AND, IN MEANTIME, HOPED JOVA WOULD CONVEY TO HIM GENERAL OUTLINE OF CONVERSATION.

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10. JOVA ASSURED FONMIN OF AMBASSADOR MCCLINTOCK'S DEEP INTEREST IN MATTER, BUT POINTED OUT DELICATE POSITION OF USG AND OWN BELIEF THIS WAS BILATERAL MATTER AFFECTING TWO CLOSE FRIENDS AND BEST SETTLED DIRECTLY BETWEEN THEM. JOVA SAID THAT SHOULD IT AT ANY TIME APPEAR TO GOV THAT THERE MIGHT BE A USEFUL AND NON-INTERFERING ROLE TO BE PLAYED BY ITS FRIENDS -- WHETHER USG, OAS, OR SOME OTHER ENTITY -- HE KNEW AMBASSADOR MCCLINTOCK WOULD BE GLAD TO RECEIVE ANY SUCH SUGGESTION AND SUBMIT IT FOR CONSIDERATION. FONMIN EXPRESSED APPRECIATION AND HOPE THAT BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS WOULD LEAD TO POINT WHERE THIRD-PARTY ROLE MIGHT BE USEFUL. JOVA SAID THIS SEEMED TO BE POSITION SHARED BY HIS OPPOSITE NUMBERS IN BOGOTA, AND CALVANI APPEARED INTENSELY INTERESTED IN THIS AND TO INTERPRET IT AS PROMISING INDICATION OF COLOMBIAN GOOD INTENTIONS.

1. FONMIN CLOSED THIS PART OF CONVERSATION BY REPEATING WITH CONSIDERABLE FERVOR THAT VENEZUELA HAD NO INTENTION OF SEEKING OTHER THAN PEACEFUL SOLUTION. HE STRESSED THAT THROUGHOUT THEIR YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE VENEZUELA AND COLOMBIA HAD HAD MANY DISPUTES BUT HAD ALWAYS BEEN ABLE TO RESOLVE THEM THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS OR OTHER PEACEFUL MEANS. GP-3.
MCCLINTOCK

SECRET