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TOT: 051316Z SEP 90
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
[REDACTED]

DIST: 05 SEPTEMBER 1990

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
COUNTRY: EL SALVADOR

SUBJ: ARMY HIGH COMMAND COMMENTS ON UPCOMING ARMY SENIOR
OFFICER CHANGES; COLONEL PONCE'S PLAN TO ORDER OFFICERS
TO TESTIFY ON THE JESUIT MURDER CASE

DCI: LATE AUGUST 1990
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

TEXT: 1. IN LATE AUGUST 1990 MEMBERS OF THE SALVADORAN ARMED FORCES
(ESAF) HIGH COMMAND MET AMONG THEMSELVES AND WITH SALVADORAN
PRESIDENT ALFREDO ((CRISTIANI)) TO DISCUSS UPCOMING SENIOR OFFICER
CHANGES WITHIN THE ESAF AIMED AT PUTTING MORE CAPABLE OFFICERS IN KEY
POSITIONS, AND REMOVING CORRUPT AND INEFFECTIVE OFFICERS FROM COMMAND
POSITIONS.

2. CHIEF OF STAFF COLONEL RENE EMILIO ((PONCE)), WHO WILL
[REDACTED]

Approved for Release

Nov 1993

BECOME MINISTER OF DEFENSE ON 1 SEPTEMBER, TOLD ESAF OFFICERS THAT HE HAS SECURED THE SUPPORT OF THE U.S. AMBASSADOR TO EL SALVADOR TO BECOME DEFENSE MINISTER, BUT THAT THE U.S. AMBASSADOR HAD ASKED PONCE'S HELP IN RESOLVING THE JESUIT MURDER CASE. PONCE SAID THAT HIS FIRST ACT AS DEFENSE MINISTER WOULD BE TO ORDER EVERY OFFICER WHO ATTENDED A 15 NOVEMBER 1989 MEETING AT THE MILITARY ACADEMY, TO PROVIDE FORMAL DECLARATIONS TO THE JUDGE IN CHARGE OF THE CASE.

6. (AMBASSADOR'S COMMENT: PONCE'S DEPICTION OF MY HAVING "ASKED HIS HELP IN RESOLVING THE JESUIT CASE" IS A SERIOUSLY UNDERSTATED DESCRIPTION OF MY MESSAGE ON WHAT THE NEW MINISTER OF DEFENSE HAD TO DO TO CHANGE PERCEPTIONS OF HIS AND THE ESAF'S PERFORMANCE VIS A VIS THE JESUIT INVESTIGATION. I TOLD PONCE THAT ABSENT BOLD, IMMEDIATE AND DRAMATIC ACTIONS IN HIS VERY FIRST DAYS AS MINISTER, HE AND THE IMAGE OF THE INSTITUTION HE NOW LEADS WOULD BE DAMAGED, POSSIBLY

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BEYOND REPAIR. THE WORDS THUS WENT FAR BEYOND THE GENTLE "WE WOULD APPRECIATE WHATEVER YOU CAN DO TO HELP US" APPROACH THAT PONCE APPEARS TO HAVE CONVEYED TO FELLOW OFFICERS.)

[REDACTED]