

DEPARTMENT OF STATE IM/IPS/CR/IR Date: 8/11/97
 RELEASE DECLASSIFY
 EXCISE DECLASSIFY IN PART EO Citations 1.5 (R)

PTQ2733

FOIA Exemptions b1 TS authority to
PA Exemptions () CLASSIFY as () S or () C Sec.
() DOWNGRADE TS to () S or () C

PTQ2733

EXCISE

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ACTION SCT-00

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-10	ACDE-00	AID-00	ARA-01	A-00	CA-02
	CCO-00	CG-00	CIAE-00	COME-00	CTME-00	OASY-00	DODE-00
	DOEE-00	DOTE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	FAAE-00	FBIE-00
	H-01	IMMC-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	INSE-00	L-01	ADS-00
	MMP-00	M-00	NRCE-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OCS-03	OIS-01
	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00	CIO-00
	SP-00	SSO-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	USSS-00	ASDS-01	PMB-00
	DSCC-00	DRL-09	G-00	/032W			

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R 132019Z JAN 97
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7287
INFO CDRUSARSO FT CLAYTON PM//SOJA//
AMEMBASSY LIMA
COMJTF PM MAXI FT CLAYTON PM
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM//SCCC/SCJ2/SCJ5/SCSJA/SCTI//

SECTION 01 OF 02 PANAMA 000133

DEPT. FOR ARA/CEN-PAN AND S/CT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 1/13/07
TAGS: PTER, PGOV, PM
SUBJECT: PANAMA: DAILY ALLEGES EXTENSIVE PANAMA-MRTA LINKS

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR WILLIAM HUGHES; REASON 1.5 (D).

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2. (C) SUMMARY. IN AN EXTENSIVE SERIES OF INVESTIGATIVE REPORTS, PANAMA DAILY "EL UNIVERSAL" ALLEGES THAT A SUBVERSIVE LOCAL ORGANIZATION CALLED "MLN-29" HAS BEEN ACTIVELY SUPPLYING ARMS AND OTHER SUPPORT TO SOUTH AMERICAN GUERRILLAS, ESPECIALLY PERU'S TUPAC AMARU REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT (MRTA), IN RECENT YEARS. "MLN-29'S" LEADERSHIP IS ALLEGED TO INCLUDE CONRADO SANJUR, A PROMINENT CATHOLIC PRIEST AND SOCIAL ACTIVIST. WHILE MOST OF THE CHARGES REMAIN UNSUBSTANTIATED, THE REPORTS HAVE PROMPTED GOP OFFICIALS TO CONCEDE THEY KNOW OF LINKS BETWEEN PANAMANIAN GROUPS AND THE MRTA. [

] POST CANNOT CONFIRM THE ALLEGATIONS, [

] END SUMMARY.

3. (U) IN A SERIES OF REPORTS PUBLISHED THE WEEK OF JANUARY 6, PANAMA CITY DAILY "EL UNIVERSAL" CLAIMED THAT PANAMA HAS SERVED AS A TRAINING GROUND IN RECENT YEARS FOR PERUVIAN MRTA REBELS, AND A SHADOWY LOCAL SUBVERSIVE ORGANIZATION KNOWN AS MLN-29 HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN FUNNELING MONEY AND ARMS FROM CENTRAL AMERICA TO COLOMBIA AND PERU. CITING UNIDENTIFIED SOURCES, THE REPORTS ALLEGE THE EXISTENCE OF A PANAMANIAN "MOVEMENT FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION-29" WHOSE TOP LEADERSHIP INCLUDES REPRESENTATIVES FROM RADICAL STUDENT GROUPS, LABOR UNIONS, PEASANT ACTIVISTS, AND A PROMINENT CATHOLIC PRIEST ACTIVE IN HUMAN RIGHTS CAUSES. ACCORDING TO THE REPORTS, MLN-29 SINCE THE EARLY 1990'S HAS PURCHASED ARMS IN EL SALVADOR AND NICARAGUA FOR SHIPMENT TO THE MRTA IN PERU AND THE NATIONAL LIBERATION ARMY (ELN) IN COLOMBIA, IN PART USING FUNDS DIVERTED FROM EUROPEAN UNION DONATIONS TO A LOCAL HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP.

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[REDACTED]

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4. (U) "EL UNIVERSAL" CHARGES THAT MLN-29 IS A RESURRECTION OF LEFTIST SUBVERSIVE MOVEMENTS LED BY PANAMANIAN STUDENT ACTIVIST FLOYD BRITTON TO RESIST THE MILITARY DICTATORSHIP FOLLOWING THE COUP OF 1968. THE "29" IS TAKEN FROM NOVEMBER 29 OF THAT YEAR, WHEN BRITTON IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN MURDERED AT COIBA ISLAND PRISON BY THE THEN-NATIONAL GUARD. BEYOND ITS ACTIVITIES IN PANAMA, THE GROUP REPORTEDLY IS DEDICATED TO SUPPORTING SUBVERSIVE

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MOVEMENTS ELSEWHERE IN THE REGION, AND HAS FORGED CLOSE LINKS WITH MRTA. ACCORDING TO "EL UNIVERSAL'S" REPORTS, MRTA COMMANDER NESTOR CERPA CARTOLLINI HAS VISITED PANAMA AT LEAST THREE TIMES IN THE LAST TWO YEARS, MRTA REBELS HAVE TRAINED ON PANAMANIAN SOIL, AND MLN-29 HAS SENT REPRESENTATIVES TO PERU TO RECEIVE INSTRUCTION FROM THE MRTA. ALLEGED MLN-29 LEADER FEDERICO BRITTON (FLOYD BRITTON'S BROTHER) IS ALSO REPORTED TO HAVE RECRUITED PANAMANIAN TO ASSIST MRTA, INCLUDING PACIFICO CASTRELLON, WHO WAS SENTENCED TO PRISON (ALONG WITH AMCIT LORI BERENSEN) BY A PERUVIAN COURT IN 1994 FOR HIS ROLE IN AN MRTA PLOT TO ATTACK THE PERUVIAN CONGRESS.

5. (U) THE "EL UNIVERSAL" ALLEGATIONS HAVE SPARKED PARTICULAR CONTROVERSY BY LINKING MERCURIAL CATHOLIC PRIEST CONRADO SANJUR TO MLN-29 AND THE MRTA. SANJUR, A WELL-KNOWN SOCIAL ACTIVIST AND PRESIDENT OF THE POPULAR COORDINATOR FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN PANAMA (SPANISH ACRONYM COPODEHUPA), A HUMAN RIGHTS NGO, IS ALLEGED TO BE A KEY LEADER OF MLN-29. THE REPORTS ALSO CHARGE THAT SANJUR AND COPODEHUPA HAVE BEEN ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN PURCHASING ARMS FOR MRTA, IN PART USING PROJECT FUNDS DONATED TO COPODEHUPA BY THE EUROPEAN UNION. SANJUR AND COPODEHUPA HAVE DENIED THE ALLEGATIONS.

6. (U) WHILE "EL UNIVERSAL" HAS REFUSED TO REVEAL ITS SOURCES, THE GOP HAS COMMENTED ON SOME ELEMENTS OF THE STORY. REACTING TO

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THE ARTICLES, PRESIDENT ERNESTO PEREZ BALLADARES TOLD THE PRESS JANUARY 9 THAT LINKS BETWEEN PANAMANIAN NGO'S AND THE MRTA "ARE MORE THAN JUST RUMORS," AND ALSO SAID HE HAD CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS ABOUT THE ALLEGED INVOLVEMENT OF SANJUR AND COPODEHUPA, BUT REFUSED TO DISCUSS DETAILS. NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER GABRIEL CASTRO ACKNOWLEDGED JANUARY 6 THAT MRTA MEMBERS HAVE TRAVELED TO PANAMA, BUT HE DECLINED TO SPECIFY WHAT ACTIVITIES THEY ARE KNOWN TO HAVE CARRIED OUT. CASTRO ALSO CONFIRMED THAT A CLANDESTINE ARMS SHIPMENT SEIZED IN THE PORT OF COLON IN 1994, DESTINED FOR THE MRTA, HAD BEEN PURCHASED IN NICARAGUA BY PANAMANIAN GASPAR LOPEZ, AN EMPLOYEE OF COPODEHUPA. LOPEZ HAS TOLD POLICE INVESTIGATORS THAT HE WAS WORKING UNDER SANJUR'S SUPERVISION.

7. (C) COMMENT. "EL UNIVERSAL," A SMALL, INDEPENDENT DAILY IN CIRCULATION ONLY SINCE 1995, HAS STIRRED UP A LOCAL HORNET'S NEST WITH ITS ALLEGATIONS, PARTICULARLY IN THE WAKE OF MRTA'S SEIZURE

OF THE JAPANESE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE IN LIMA. THE CREDIBILITY OF ITS REPORTS HAS BEEN HURT SOMEWHAT BY "EL UNIVERSAL'S" FAILURE TO CITE IDENTIFIABLE SOURCES,

HOWEVER, THE ARTICLES HAVE PROMPTED THE GOP TO ACKNOWLEDGE PUBLICLY THAT IT KNOWS OF TIES BETWEEN PANAMANIAN GROUPS AND THE MRTA.

(MLN-29 SHOULD NOT BE CONFUSED WITH FER-29, A WELL-KNOWN RADICAL STUDENT GROUP. "EL UNIVERSAL" DOES CHARGE, THOUGH, THAT FER-29 LEADERS ARE INVOLVED



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	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00	CIO-00
	SP-00	SSO-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	USSS-00	ASDS-01	PMB-00
	DSCC-00	DRL-09	G-00	/032W			

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R 132019Z JAN 97
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7288
INFO CDRUSARSO FT CLAYTON PM//SOJA//
AMEMBASSY LIMA

COMJTF PM MAXI FT CLAYTON PM
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM//SCCC/SCJ2/SCJ5/SCSJA/SCTI//

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PANAMA 000133

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WITH MLN-29.) FATHER CONRADO SANJUR, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS WIDELY

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KNOWN FOR HIS ANTI-U.S. VIEWS [

[A SPOKESMAN FOR THE
ARCHDIOCESE, QUOTED IN LEADING DAILY "LA PRENSA," ACKNOWLEDGED
THAT DIMAS "HAS BEEN WORRIED FOR SOME TIME ABOUT THE ROUTE SANJUR
IS TAKING." [

] END COMMENT.

HUGHES