

Message Text

SECRET

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61/62

ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W

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P 282118Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHD PRIORITY 3217

S E C R E T LA PAZ 03430

STADIS//////////

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, BL

SUBJ: GOB INTEREST IN PURCHASING TANKS

REF: STATE 110568 AND PREVIOUS

1. CHARGE AND ACTING COMMANDER MILGP CALLED ON COMMANDING GENERAL BOLIVIAN ARMY CARLOS ALCOREZA MAY 28 PURSUANT TO REFTEL. ALCOREZA WAS INFORMED THAT (1) M-41 LIGHT TANK NOT AVAILABLE FROM US SOURCES BUT THAT POSSIBLE THIRD COUNTRY SOURCES OF THIS VEHICLE WILL BE INVESTIGATED; (2) THAT M-551 ARMORED AIRBORNE RECONNAISSANCE VEHICLE UNAVAILABLE AT THIS TIME; AND (3) THAT THE US WAS PREPARED TO OFFER AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO (1) AND (2) THE M-48.

2. ALCOREZA REPLIED THAT THE M-48 TANK SEEMED TO HIM TOO HEAVY A TANK AND TOO HEAVILY ARMORED FOR BOLIVIA'S NEEDS. HE ELABORATED ON THESE NEEDS AS BEING ESSESTIALLY OF AN INTERNAL SECURITY NATURE AND BY NO MEANS DESIGNED TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY WAR AGAINST ANY OF BOLIVIA'S NEIGHBORS, E.G. CHILE AND PERU. NONETHELESS, HE WAS PREPARED TO RECONSIDER AND ACCEPTED OUR OFFER TO PROVIDE PRICE AND AVAILABILITY INFORMATION. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE BOLIVIAN ARMY WITHIN A VERY SHORT TIME WOULD BEGIN A DEFINITIVE STAFF STUDY OF SECRET

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TANKS AND ARMORED VEHICLES WHICH WOULD BE SUITED TO THE NEEDS

OF THE BOLIVIAN ARMY.

3. COMMENT: GIVEN THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE M-48, IT WOULD NOT APPEAR THAT THIS TANK CAN REALISTICALLY BE CONSIDERED AS A Viable ALTERNATIVE TO THE SOVIET T-55 TANK, AT LEAST AS VIEWED BY GEN ALCOREZA AT THIS TIME. FOR THIS REASON, THE EMBASSY HOPES THAT THE DEPT CAN PROVIDE US AT AN EARLY DATE INFORMATION AS TO NON-US SOURCES FOR THE M-41 LIGHT TANK. IN ANY EVENT, WE MADE IT CLEAR TO GEN ALCOREZA THAT WE WERE OFFERING THE M-48 AS A FIRM ALTERNATIVE TO THE M-41 AND THE M-551.

4. ACTION REQUESTED: THAT THE DEPT SUPPLY THE EMBASSY WITH PRICE AND AVAILABILITY INFORMATION FOR THE M-48 TANK.

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

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