

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LA PAZ 02637 291854Z
ACTION ARA-15

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E.O. 12065: N/A
TAGS: POINT, BL
SUBJECT: (U) BOLIVIA COMMEMORATES CENTENNIAL OF WAR OF THE PACIFIC

1. (U) ON MARCH 23, 1979, BOLIVIA CELEBRATED "SEA DAY",
THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF TOPATER, IN CHIWHC
BOLIVIA'S NATIONAL HERO, EDUARDO AVAROA, LOST IS LIFE,
WITH PARADES AND SPEECHES IN ALL THE MAJOR CITIES
THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.

2. (U) THE THEME OF THE DAY WAS THAT BOLIVIA WOULD
NEVER ABANDON ITS RIGHT AND DETERMINATION TO REGAIN ITS
PACIFIC SEACOAST, LOST IN THE WAR OF THE PACIFIC 100 YEARS
AGO. IN LA PAZ THE PARADE, DESCRIBED BY THE PRESS AS
BOLIVIA'S LONGEST AND LARGEST PARADE EVER, LASTED TEN
HOURS. MARCHERS CARRIED BOLIVIAN FLAGS WITH A BLUE BANNER
SYMBOLIC OF BOLIVIA'S LOST SEACOAST.

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PAGE 02 LA PAZ 02637 291854Z

3. (U) IN HIS SPEECH PRESIDENT PADILLA CASTIGATED CHILE
FOR A "SPIRIT OF CONQUEST" WHICH STILL EXISTS AND ACCUSED
BOLIVIA'S NEIGHBOR OF "BAD FAITH, ARROGANCE, IMCOMPREHENSION,
AND INTRANSIGENCE" IN RECENT NEGOTIATIONS. CONSEQUENTLY, HE
SAID BOLIVIA BROKE RELATIONS WITH CHILE AND "ONLY WHEN THE
VERY DIFFICULT CONDITIONS WHICH THEY HAVE TRIED TO IMPOSE

ON US HAVE DISAPPEARED, WHEN THE UNCHANGING CHILEAN INTRANSIGENCE HAD GONE, CAN WE RENEW THE DIALOGUE." PADILLA LAUDED THE HEROES OF TOPATER AND CALLED ON BOLIVIANS NEVER TO RENOUNCE THEIR RIGHT TO ACCESS TO THE SEA. HE DESCRIBED THE SEA OUTLET QUESTION AS THE GREATEST THREAT TO THE PEACE IN THE AMERICAS. NEVERTHELESS, "THE BOLIVIAN PEOPLE ARE NOT ANIMATED BY ANY FEELING OF HATRED OR RESIGNATION. THEREFORE, ITS LOVE OF PEACE SHOULD NOT BE CONFUSED WITH FEAR OR BLIND ACCEPTANCE OF INJUSTICE."

4. (U) PADILLA REITERATED THE COMMITMENT OF THE ARMED FORCES TO RETURN BOLIVIA TO CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT AND CALLED FOR ALL BOLIVIANS TO BE UNITED AND TO FULFILL THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES.

5. (U) AN ARGENTINE MILITARY DELEGATION LED BY VICE ADMIRAL VANEK PARTICIPATED IN THE CEREMONIES AND A GROUP OF ARGENTINE AIR FORCE CANBERRA AIRCRAFT OVERFLEW LA PAZ TO DEMONSTRATE SUPPORT FOR BOLIVIA'S SEA OUTLET CLAIM.

6. (L) COMMENT: BOLIVIA'S COMMEMORATION OF THE CENTENNIAL OF THE BATTLE OF TOPATER CAME OFF SMOOTHLY AND WITHOUT INCIDENT AND PROVIDED ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY FOR THE COUNTRY TO underscore ITS DETERMINATION TO NEGOTIATE A SOLUTION TO THE SEA OUTLET PROBLEM. THE TONE OF PADILLA'S SPEECH AND THE THEMES OF THE PLACARDS CARRIED IN THE PARADES WERE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 LA PAZ 02637 291854Z

ALL CONSISTENT WITH BOLIVIA'S OFT-REPEATED STATEMENT THAT WHILE IT IS DETERMINED TO REGAIN ACCESS TO THE PACIFIC IT IS ALSO DETERMINED TO DO THIS VIA PEACEFUL NEGOTIATIONS. THE MASSIVE PARTICIPATION OF THE LA PAZ POPULATION IN THE MARCH 23 COMMEMORATION WAS AN IMPRESSIVE DEMONSTRATION THAT (A) NO CAUSE INCITES AND UNITES BOLIVIANS LIKE THE SEA-ACCESS ISSUE AND (B) THIS CAUSE WILL NOT REcede IN BOLIVIAN DIPLOMACY, REGARDLESS OF PASSAGE OF TIME.

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