

Message Text

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42

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 AID-20 EB-11 FEA-02 CIEP-02

COME-00 OMB-01 TRSE-00 SCI-06 DRC-01 /123 W

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O R 221452Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3163

INFO USCINCSO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 3295

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, PFOR, BL

SUBJECT: POLITICAL TENSIONS RISE OVER RELATIONS WITH BRAZIL

REF: LA PAZ 3187

1. TENSIONS ARE RUNNING HIGH IN POLITICAL AND MILITARY CIRCLES ON THE EVE OF THE GEISEL VISIT AND THE SCHEDULED SIGNING OF THE GAS SALES CONTRACT BETWEEN BRAZIL AND BOLIVIA.

2. THE LATTER, WITH ITS COROLLARY PROSPECTS FOR CREATING A SOUTHEASTERN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLE, DEBATED IN PUBLIC FORA (INCLUDING ESPECIALLY THE PRESS) OVER THE PAST MONTH. IT IS THE KIND OF ISSUE AROUND WHICH PUBLIC OPINION CAN AND WILL POLARIZE, AND IT HAS ALREADY HELPED TO BRING TOGETHER A NUMBER OF HERETOFORE DISPARATE GROUPS OPPOSED TO THE BANZER REGIME.

3. TENSIONS HAVE BEEN AGGRAVATED IN THE PAST FOUR DAYS BY THE LARGELY UNRELATED DISTURBANCES AT THE UNIVERSITY IN LA PAZ WHERE PROTEST DEMONSTRATIONS INVOLVING THE NAMING OF A NEW RECTOR WERE DISBANDED BY TEAR GAS AND POLICE DOGS (AND POSSIBLY GUNFIRE). A SMALL NUMBER OF STUDENTS HAVE BEEN

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ARRESTED, AND THE UNIVERSITY HAS BEEN CLOSED INDEFINITELY.

4. GIVEN THE EXTRAORDINARY SECURITY PRECAUTIONS RELATED TO THE GEISEL VISIT AND THE ALREADY EXISTING STATE OF SIEGE, THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT IN A TOLERANT MOOD AND HAS OVERREACTED TO CRITICISM OF THE PROPOSED GAS SALES CONTRACT. YESTERDAY, FOR INSTANCE, PRA AND PDC CHIEFS WALTER GUEVARA ARZE AND BENJAMIN MIGUEL AND LOCAL MNRI REPRESENTATIVE WERE EXILED FOR THEIR OPEN CRITICISM OF THE CONTRACT. THE MILITARY ARE DIVIDED ON THE ISSUE AND FEELINGS ARE RUNNING HIGH, PARTICULARLY AMONG SUCH INFLUENTIAL YOUNGER ARMY OFFICERS AS LTC RAUL LOPEZ LEYTON, WHO SEE THE CONTRACT AS A SELL-OUT TO BRAZIL.

5. ALTHOUGH THE SIGNING NO DOUBT WILL TAKE PLACE AS SCHEDULED AND ORDER WILL BE MAINTAINED, THE ISSUE WILL REMAIN. BANZER MAY HAVE TO MAKE SOME OTHER CONCESSIONS TO THE MILITARY TO FORESTALL A SERIOUS WEAKENING OF HIS POWER BASE OVER THIS ISSUE, WHICH HAS SUCH SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS FOR BOLIVIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY.
BREWIN

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