

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-15

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11

/069 W

-----128362 300006Z /75

R 281342Z MAR 79

FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5432

INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCSO J2 QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ

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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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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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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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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: WAR, COMMEMORATIVE CELEBRATIONS, ACCESS TO PORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 mar 1979
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1979LAPAZ02637
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D790145-0392
Format: TEL
From: LA PAZ
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1979/newtext/t19790317/aaaaanhr.tel
Line Count: 104
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 39e507d4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3547360
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: (U) BOLIVIA COMMEMORATES CENTENNIAL OF WAR OF THE PACIFIC
TAGS: PINT, EWWT, BL
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/39e507d4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014