

## Message Text

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73

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-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

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/157 W

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R 041237Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2729

INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 2065

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, BL, CI, PE

SUBJ: PRESIDENT CONVOKES "NATIONAL ASSEMBLY" TO DISCUSS

ACCESS TO THE SEA ISSUE

REF: LA PAZ 2024

1. AS REPORTED IN REFTEL, PRESIDENT BANZER ANNOUNCED HIS DECISION MARCH 31 TO MEET WITH GROUP OF DISTINGUISHED BOLIVIANS (EX-PRESIDENTS AND FOREIGN MINISTERS, POLITICAL PARTY AND LABOR LEADERS, ETC.) TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE STRATEGIES FOR REGAINING THE COUNTRY'S ACCESS TO THE SEA. IN SUBSEQUENT DAYS, RESPONSE TO BANZER'S PROPOSAL IN PRESS AND PUBLIC OPINION HAS BEEN UNANIMOUSLY FAVORABLE: IN THE VIEW OF PRESTIGIOUS LA PAZ DAILY EL DIARIO, "FEW POLITICAL INITIATIVES HAVE BEEN SO WELL RECEIVED IN RECENT TIMES." EVEN OPPOSITION POLITICIANS SUCH AS CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY CHIEF BENJAMIN MIGUEL AND PRA LEADER WALTER GUEVARA WEL-  
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COMED THE PRESIDENT'S INVITATION TO ATTEND MEETING, ALTHOUGH

BOTH COMPLAINED THAT EXILED OPPPOSITIONISTS SUCH AS EX-PRESIDENTS PAZ ESTENSSORO, SILES ZUAZO, OVANDO AND TORRES SHOULD ALSO HAVE BEEN PERMITTED TO ATTEND

2. SESSIONS OF THIS MEETING, CALLED A "NATIONAL ASSEMBLY" BY PRESIDENT BANZER, WILL COMMENCE AT 10 A.M. ON PARIL 5 IN COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF SCHOOL IN COCHABAMBA. TOGETHER WITH PRESIDENT BANZER, GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND MEMBERS OF JOINT COMMAND OF ARMED FORCES, FIVE FORMER PRESIDENT OF BOLIVIA (DAVID TORO, MAMERTO URRIOLAGOITIA, ENRIQUE HERTZOG, HUGO BALLIVIAN AND LUIS ADOLFO SILES SALINAS) AND MANY FORMER FOREIGN MINISTERS (INCLUDING GUEVARA, ALBERTO CRESPO GUTIERREZ AND MARIO GUTIERREZ) WILL ATTEND MEETING, WHICH IS EXPECTED TO CONCLUDE ON APRIL 6. BANZER WILL ANNOUNCE RESULTS OF SESSIONS TO NATION IN A SPEECH TO BE DELIVERED FOLLOWING CLOSING OF CONFERENCE

3. COMMENT: CONSULTATIVE MEETING IN COCHABAMBA REEMPHASIZES DECISION BY BANZER GOVERNMENT, REPORTED IN REFTEL, TO GIVE RE-NEWED POLICY EMPHASIS TO CENTURY-OLD THEME OF "RETURN TO THE SEA." MEETING WILL ALSO SERVE GOVERNMENT'S GOAL OF UNITING DIVERSE STRANDS OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL OPINION BEHIND THIS FOREIGN POLICY ISSUE, WHILE DISTRACTING PUBLIC ATTENTION FROM SUCH PRESSING INTERNAL PROBLEMS AS FOOD SHORTAGES AND INFLATION. WE EXPECT THAT GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO GENERATE HIGH LEVEL OF OFFICIAL ACTIVITY AND PUBLIC DEBATE OVER ACCESS TO THE SEA QUESTION UNTIL EITHER POPULAR INTEREST WANES OR NEW ISSUES ARISE TO TAKE PRIORITY OVER THIS FAMILIAR THEME IN BOLIVIAN FOREIGN POLICY.

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## Message Attributes

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