

Message Text

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60
ACTION ARA-20

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

PM-07 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SPC-03 SS-20 EB-11 AID-20 COME-00 TRSE-00 DRC-01 /112 W
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O 292103Z JAN 74
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2091
SECDEF IMMEDIATE
USCINCSO IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 0612

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, BL
SUBJ: MILITARY ATTITUDES TOWARD BANZER

REF: USDAO LA PAZ MSG 242015Z

1. REGRETABLE THAT SUBJECT MESSAGE NOT CLEARED OR COORDINATED WITH THE EMBASSY'S POLITICAL SECTION. APART FROM MINOR ERRORS FROM SOURCES SUCH AS STATEMENTS THAT THE ARMY HAS A ROLE IN PRICE CONTROLS (IT DOES NOT), OR THAT PRICE INCREASES WERE ABOUT 300 PERCENT (THEY WERE ABOUT 100 PERCENT) WHICH COULD HAVE BEEN CORRECTED IN THE COMMENT, THE COMMENT ITSELF IS IN ERROR WHEN IT SUGGESTS THAT THE PRESIDENT'S VERY DIFFICULT DECISION TO IMPLEMENT THE LATEST ECONOMIC PACKAGE WAS MADE TO PLACATE THE POLITICIANS AND THEREBY STAY IN OFFICE. POLITICIANS IN BOLIVIA AT THIS TIME HAVE NEITHER THE DESIRE TO ALIENATE THE PUBLIC AT LARGE NOR THE CLOUD TO DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT THE PRESIDENT STAYS IN OFFICE.

2. THE EMBASSY DOES NOT WISH TO SUGGEST THAT THE ARMY IS SOLIDLY BEHIND BANZER. IT ISN'T NOW AND NEVER HAS BEEN. IT MAY EVEN BE LESS SOLIDLY BEHIND THE PRESIDENT NOW THAN A FEW MONTHS AGO BECAUSE THERE HAS BEEN, AFTER ALL,
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RATHER WIDE-SPREAD CRITICISM OF THE WAY THE GOV HAS HANDLED

NATIONAL ECONOMIC PROBLEMS SINCE LAST OCTOBER. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS HIGHLY IMPROBABLE THAT GENERAL ALCOREZA WOULD HAVE TOLD A LARGE GROUP OF CADETS THAT THE ARMY WOULD DUMP BANZER IF HE APPEARS TO LOSE SUPPORT, AS STATED IN REFTEL.

3. THE EMBASSY AGREES THAT THERE MAY BE GROWING SENTIMENTS WITHIN THE MILITARY FOR A CHANGE IN THE PRESIDENCY. THE EMBASSY HAS REPORTED THE RATHER PERSISTENT TALK ABOUT THE PROSPECTS OF A MILITARY JUNTA OR AN ALL-MILITARY CABINET. HOWEVER, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THIS IS THE TIME FOR EITHER, BECAUSE NEITHER WOULD BE ABLE TO PRESENT NEW SOLUTIONS TO THE EXISTING PROBLEMS. THE MILITARY DOES NOT WISH TO BEAR THE FULL BRUNT OF GENERAL CRITICISM AND IS UNLIKELY TO PUT ITSELF IN THIS POSITION. ALSO REPORTED IN THE PAST HAS BEEN THE EXTRAORDINARY EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GOB IN DISCOVERING AND CRUSHING COUP PLOTS.

4. IN SUM, THE GOB IS FACING PROBLEMS AT THIS TIME AS THE DEPARTMENT KNOWS, BUT WE BELIEVE BANZER'S SURVIVAL PROSPECTS CONTINUE TO BE GOOD.

STEDMAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ARMED FORCES, PRESIDENT, ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, PRESS COMMENTS, GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, PRICE TRENDS, ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 JAN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974LAPAZ00612
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: LA PAZ
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t1974019/aaaaaiav.tel
Line Count: 82
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
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: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: USDAO LA PAZ MSG 242015Z
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 SEP 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09 SEP 2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <10 DEC 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MILITARY ATTITUDES TOWARD BANZER
TAGS: PINS, MILI, BL, (BANZER SUAREZ, HUGO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005