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FROM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA	CLASSIFICATION SECRET [REDACTED]	R
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E.O. ~~12958~~
TAGS:
SUBJECT:

12356: DECL: 8/16/88
MILI, HO, SNAR, MASS, PEPR
VISIT OF ADMIRAL TRAIN TO HONDURAS, AUGUST 11-13

CN: 6850

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ACTION:

SECSTATE WASHDC

INFO:

SECDEF WASHDC
JCS WASHDC
CINCLANT NORFOLK
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PN

~~SECRET~~ TEGUCIGALPA 6850

1. ~~SECRET~~ - ENTIRE TEXT

2. Admiral Harry Train visited Honduras August 11-13 at invitation of Honduran Armed Forces Commander General Alvarez. During his two days here Admiral Train called on Honduras' top military and civilian leadership and visited various locations on Honduras' North Coast. The Admiral visited the Puerto Cortes Naval Base, the Puerto Castilla construction site and he overflew key points of interest in the Mosquitia region. He also received a briefing from the ~~K~~ Fifth Battalion Commander at Puerto Lempira where the battalion has been transferred only recently. And, Admiral Train met briefly with the Commander of the Air Base at Ceiba.

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DRAFTED BY: AMB:JDNegroponte:kjl	DRAFTING DATE 8-16-82	TEL. EXT. 211	CONTENTS AND CLASSIFICATION APPROVED BY: AMB:JDNegroponte
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CLEARANCES:

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3. The level and atmosphere of the reception accorded Admiral Train was very much in line with the friendly spirit which seems to have prevailed since Doctor Suazo's visit to Washington, July 13-15. President Suazo received the Admiral on August 11 and was ~~whizk~~ quick to volunteer his interest in a joint-use U.S./Honduran naval facility. He also told Admiral Train that he counted on the U.S. to be by Honduras' side in the event his "red telephone" ever rang with the news that Nicaraguan forces were attacking Honduras.

4. During his visits outside of Tegucigalpa, the Admiral was accompanied by the Commander of the Honduran Navy, Colonel Ruben Montoya. Colonel Montoya's main interest was to give Admiral Train an appreciation of the difficulties involved in patrolling Honduras' North Coast from Puerto Cortes in the extreme northern part of the country. This is why the Honduran Navy also wishes to establish a base at Puerto Castilla, an excellent deep water harbor which divides the North Coast roughly in half. Puerto Castilla was used by the U.S. Navy for submarines during World War II. Colonel Montoya also intends to establish a sort of forward naval base near the Caratasca sandbar in the Mosquitia, an essential step in light of repeated incursions by Sandinista naval vessels across the Honduran/Nicaraguan maritime boundary at the fifteenth parallel.

5. In discussing his plans and specific needs with Admiral Train, Colonel Montoya made clear that the Honduran Armed Forces would welcome increased U.S. naval involvement here. First, our ship visits appear to be very welcome and the Hondurans would like more of them. This was independently confirmed by the Mayor and other officials of the City of Tela where the Admiral spent the night of August 12. The Portland, with a complement of 600 Marines, had just completed a visit to Tela. Next, the Hondurans would be interested in a basing arrangement with the United States. And, third, the Hondurans would probably be amenable to making one or more of their coastal airfields available for use by Naval reconnaissance aircraft. Since this was essentially an orientation visit, none of these topics were discussed at particular length. But they are illustrative of potential areas for U.S./Honduran naval cooperation.

6. There were two specific areas where Colonel Montoya did ask for our immediate assistance. First, he was hopeful that Honduras could have a higher priority when it came to the acquisition of decommissioned U.S. naval ships. Second, he wanted some advice on the acquisition of a coastal radar for use off the Mosquitia and help in training the necessary personnel.

7. COMMENT: Embassy believes that Admiral Train's visit has laid the groundwork for greater U.S./Honduran cooperation in the naval sphere. In addition to whatever assistance we might be able to provide in improving Honduras' own naval capabilities, we believe most promising avenue in the near term would be in the area of staging or forward basing of naval reconnaissance aircraft in Honduras for strictly military as well as drug enforcement purposes.

8. This report was prepared after Admiral Train departed Honduras.

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NEGROPONTE