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ACTION ARA 15

INFO L 03, H 02, P 04, USIA 12, INR 07, CIA 04, NSA 02, COM 08, E 15,

AID 28, MM 01, IO 15, RSP 01, RSC 01, /125 W

R 052228Z JAN 68

FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4375

INFO AMCONSUL SAGO DE LOS CABALLEROS 613

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SUBJECT: "CRIMINAL HANDS" ALLEGEDLY INVOLVED IN "MYSTERIOUS DEATHS"

1. PRESIDENT BALAGUER CONFIRMED TO PRESS DEC 31 THAT "MYSTERIOUS DEATHS", NOW REPORTEDLY NUMBERING BETWEEN 19 AND 22, WHICH HAVE OCCURRED SINCE SEPT AT VILLAGES OF RINCON CLARO AND LOS MANA (NORTHEAST OF CECIVOS AND ON BORDER OF SANCHEZ RAMIREZ AND DUARTE PROVINCES) DUE TO "CRIMINAL HANDS". STATEMENT WAS BASED ON SEPARATE INVESTIGATIONS MADE BY PUERTO RICAN AND DOMINICAN MEASUREMENT TEAMS, WHICH REPORTEDLY INDICATED DEATHS DUE TO POISONING BY PARATHION INSECTICIDE MANUFACTURED BY NIAGARA CHEMICAL DIVISION OF FMC CORP, MIDDLEPORT, NEW YORK, WITH POSSIBLY ANOTHER TOXIC



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DETERMINE CAUSE. PRD RADIO PROGRAM SUBSEQUENTLY TOOK UP ISSUE, HOLDING GOVT RESPONSIBLE FOR DEATHS. FROM BEGINNING WILD RUMOR AND SUPERSTITION PREVAILED IN VILLAGES REGARDING CAUSE OF DEATH RANGING FROM WITCHCRAFT TO RARE DISEASE CARRIED BY HAITIANS AND POISONING OF FOOD OR WATER AS RESULT OF CROP FUMIGATION.

3. MEDICAL INVESTIGATORS, INCLUDING TEAM FROM USAID, HAVE DESCRIBED DEATHS FROM POISONING BY PARATHION AS "CRIMINAL", "PRE-MEDITATED", "VOLUNTARY" AND "INTENTIONAL" AND NOT ACCIDENTAL, CITING AS BASIS MANNER AND TIMING OF OCCURRENCES AND EVIDENCE WERE SELECTIVE AND NOT INDISCRIMINATE.

4. POLICE HOMICIDE SQUAD REPORTEDLY HAS DETAINED TEN PERSONS FOR INVESTIGATION. QUARANTINE ESTABLISHED SINCE JAN 2 BY VARIOUS GOV AGENCIES AROUND BOTH VILLAGES TO ISOLATE PROBLEM. HOWEVER, BEL ATTENTION TO MATTER HAS LEFT GOV VULNERABLE TO CHARGE OF NEGLIGENCE. CRIMINALS